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ELEONORA DUSE :
The Story of Her Life



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DUSE, OF THE BEAUTIFUL HANDS, AT 45.

Frontispiece.

ELEONORA DUSE :

The Story of Her Life

By
JEANNE BORDEUX

WITH 26 ILLUSTRATIONS

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De Bonis, Sofia (mcquaid)

TO THE MEMORY OF
ELEONORA DUSE:
WOMAN OF INFINITE PITY;
DIVINE PRECEPTRESS OF DRAMATIC ART.

PREFACE

DURING the three months that I have been compiling and writing the life of the late Eleonora Duse I have so absolutely lived and suffered with her that my vast admiration has become a reverent love, and I believe that no one in the world ever succeeded in knowing her as I did. . . . Each one of her friends, intimates and actors saw her in a different light ; I saw her in all those lights merged into one, as from birth she unflinching followed her destiny, magnificently, humbly fulfilling the mission for which she was sent into the world.

My first hope was to translate the memoirs of the Grand Actress, as she herself promised me I should, if she ever wrote them, and, failing to, she gave me the permission to some day write, in English, a simple story of her life. And that is all this book pretends to be : the simple, true story of Eleonora Duse's life from birth to death.

I wish to thank all those who have so kindly helped me in my difficult task, particularly Signora Enif Robert, M. Edouard Schneider, M. Jean Philippe Worth, Cavaliere Cesare Levi, Professor Edgardo Maddalena, Signor Camillo Antona-Traversi, and Signor Mazzanti, who supplied me with the entire foreign schedule ; and many, many others in private life who have asked me not to mention their names, as they would mean nothing to the public.

JEANNE BORDEUX.

Paris, Sept. 2nd, 1924.

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Eleonora Duse : The Story of Her Life

PART I

Ancestors—Family—Birth—Early Life—First Stage Appearance—
Career—First Mention of Talent—Continued Successes—
Marriage—First Tour in South America—Return to Italy—
Difficulties—Life Until 1890.

A MOMENTARY halt of a cheap theatrical road company, early in the month of October, 1859, caused the little town of Vigevano to become many years later famous as the birthplace of the greatest actress of the twentieth century.

Eleonora Duse was not born at Vigevano, however, but in a third-class railway carriage between Venice and Vigevano, as the little company of which her father was manager, or leading man, had closed their season at Venice the evening of October 2nd, and were travelling by night to Vigevano, where they were opening a short season on the evening of the third.

A third-class railway carriage was not an ordinary thing in those days in Italy, and certainly could not have been a place of any great comfort, or exactly the setting for a birth. . . . No doctor, no nurse, no experienced hands to take the new-born baby, no dainty clothes waiting to cover the tiny form ; nothing dear to the heart of even the most humble woman.

In poverty, abject poverty, Eleonora Duse came into the world.

In 1912 a French paper, *Comœdia*, published a very charming article, in which it was stated that Eleonora Duse was born in a train, and baptised at Chioggia, where an Austrian soldier, when she was brought into the Church, thinking that a *reliquia sacro* was to take place, presented arms. G. Roland, who wrote the article, had found in the archives of the Parish Cathedral of St. Ambrogio, Vigevano, the register of the birth of the great actress—folio 116, births of 1858 (some authorities insist upon 1859)—October 5th, at four o'clock in the afternoon, Signor Alessandro Duse, son of the late Luigi Duse, actor, presented a new-born baby of feminine sex, which he declared to be his daughter, and that of his legal wife, Angelica Cappeletto, living with him at Vigevano. The register affirms also that the child was born on October 3rd, at two o'clock in the morning. He gave her the names of Eleonora Guilia Amalia. The godfather was Enrico Duse, actor, and brother of Alessandro. . . . She was baptised by the *parraco teologo*, Carlo Pradis.

The story of the Austrian soldier presenting arms cannot be true, as at that time there were no foreign soldiers in Vigevano. The city was then a part of the kingdom of Sardinia, and was the garrison of two regiments of Sardinian cavalry.

That a soldier presented arms seems to have a certain foundation, for among the stage props a glass and cloth of gold case existed, and Alessandro Duse no doubt put the baby into that case in order to carry her with less difficulty, and the soldier on guard seeing the astonishing case believed it to be the ashes of some distinguished person and presented arms.

True, or not true, the suggestion of tragedy remains, like the far-reaching shadow of coming events.

After the baptism Alessandro took the baby back to her mother, and, as he laid her in his wife's arms, he is believed to have told her that their child will one

day be famous, that kings will bow down to her, for already the king's army has presented arms.

The mother did not live to see the fulfilment of the prophecy.

Luigi Duse, the great-grandfather of Eleonora, was born in Chioggia, 1792, and was a dialect actor of sufficient merit and fame. He was the first of the Duse family to go on the stage. Before him the family had been distinguished in various occupations—trades, no doubt, though there exists no accurate records of the Duses before Luigi.

At the old St. Samuele Theatre of Venice, Luigi Duse presented almost exclusively the Goldoni repertoire. When, as frequently happened, his public tired of Goldoni, the good genial Duse, who was like a member of the family with his habitual public, imagined himself a new type for them, created something on the order of "Meneghino" (Milanese), which was merely a new mask for his old familiar "Giocometto."

From memoirs of some of the old regulars of the theatre the titles of various plays given by Luigi Duse can be found. The plays in those days changed, but the leading character of Giocometto remained. The greatest successes were : "L'Imbrogio de le Tre Mugier," "La Veneziana di Spirito," "I Due Giocometti." These were merely evening expositions of the actualities of the day.

George Sand, during her adventurous love-trip to Venice, had the opportunity of knowing Duse, and of interesting herself in his art—of which she speaks rather at length in her book "L'Histoire de Ma Vie."

Without any particular warning the capricious hand of Fortune turned, and Duse was forced to leave his unstable public of Venice, and the St. Samuele Theatre, for Padua. . . . There he lived many years

in perfect peace, adored by his public—a very special public, composed of students, modest as to financial means, but exuberant in their admiration.

In Padua his success was continuous and clamorous. He knew the agitation of Art, but never wealth ; and later, in that city, ruin came upon him. For political reasons he fell into disgrace, from which he was never able to rise again.

After having tried his luck once more in Venice, he returned to Padua, where he died in 1854.

With the celebrated, original and unfortunate "Giocometto," the dynasty of the Duses in dramatic art began, which dynasty ends, unless some distant, and as yet unknown, cousin comes to the front, with the lamented Eleonora.

Luigi Rasi—one-time leading man with Eleonora Duse—the beloved and much-regretted student of the lives of Italian actors, many years ago drew up a sort of genealogical tree of the Duse family. In Rasi's tree there were all the brothers of her father, with their respective wives and children, which I have left out as it seems useless reading, being quite out of the story of the life that I am writing of.

DUSE—Natale Duse, married Teresa Sambo (non-professionals) ; their son, Luigi Duse, married Elisabetta Barbini of Padova. Their children were Eugenio Duse (prompter), Georgio Duse (character actor), Alessandro Duse (leading man), Enrico Duse (juvenile).

All these four married actresses, whose children in turn went on the stage, some of them rising to a certain fame.

Alessandro Duse married Angelica Cappeletto, of Vicenza ; their child was—Eleonora. . . .

As they say in Italian, "*figlio dell'arte*" (child of the theatre), there could be only one future for the little girl born, one might almost say, "between



LUIGI DUSE.

The grandfather of Eleonora, in his famous Venetian costume of 1850.

acts": the life of the stage—with its misery, squalor, immorality.

In England and the United States the theatres are modern, with necessary comforts; and even half a century ago they were no doubt quite possible; but in Italy . . .

To-day the best theatres, even in the big cities, behind the scenes are miserably poor places. The star's dressing-room a bare closet with a plain board table, two or three stiff chairs and a tiny iron wash-stand in a far corner, a few pegs to hang the costumes on, and that is all. From the conditions now, one can vaguely imagine what the houses, where a cheap road company played, were sixty years ago.

Could a child born during a tedious railway journey ever know repose? Could the memory of her early surroundings ever be obliterated? Must not some of the shame and horror of the young mother during labour have left its mark on the child?

Added to the abnormal conditions of birth the Italian, impetuous, enthusiastic character and the third generation of artistic temperament, one can easily account for the weirdly mystic nature of the child, the strange unfathomable charm of the young woman, the restlessness and continued search after the unknown of the middle aged and the marvellous sweetness of the old woman.

Like most children of the theatre, Eleonora Duse grew up on the stage, and as soon as she could walk and talk she began to act. At the age of four she played the part of Cosette, in a shortened version of Victor Hugo's "*Les Misérables*," with her father's company at Chioggia.

At the tender age of four, when most children are being pampered and petted, she heard her first applause, saw the baby face changed by make-up, felt the responsibility of an expectant public.

Poor little Cosette ! When the shrew of the piece kicked her under the table, her mother, from the wings, tried to reassure the child.

"Don't cry, baby," she would say, "nor be so afraid—you're only being hurt to make them laugh."

And the poor little girl, try as she would, could never understand why one person must be hurt in order to make a lot of people laugh ; nor why the amusement of one must be bought at the price of another's pain.

The nomadic life of the Italian actors in the 'sixties and 'seventies was such that even the poorest do not care to picture to-day. They knew no repose, vacations were unheard of—for vacations might at any time be forced upon them by the failure of the company ; so unless ill-luck came they never permitted themselves a day far from the theatre. During the cold of winter, always in unheated cars, and through the long sweltering nights of the summer, they travelled from place to place, seldom complaining, giving each night their laughter, or tears, in exchange for the applause of the public.

One evening, in a little town of the province of Veneto, Signora Duse, with her little daughter, was invited to the home of some well-to-do friends. . . . In the warm sitting-room, which to little Eleonora seemed like a corner of Paradise, she looked with intense longing at a doll that belonged to the friend's daughter. The lady, knowing that she had never possessed a doll, took her little girl aside and persuaded her to make Eleonora, who was seven, a present of the toy.

In ecstasy she took the modest doll, which appeared the most beautiful thing in the world to her. When she and her mother had left the hospitable home, and were again in the street on their way home, she suddenly thought of the poor, cold, dark, ordinary

furnished room where they, with other actors, were forced to live. She turned back, ran quickly up the steps, followed by her mother, who had no idea of the child's reason for the right-about-face. She rang the bell, ran into the sitting-room, and put the doll on the sofa where she had found it, then turning to the lady said :

" I don't want her to suffer from the cold, and I can't keep her as you can, so—so I shall be happier knowing that she's here ! " Pale and serious, heroically holding back the tears which the separation from the doll cost her, she went away.

All her life Eleonora Duse was destined to suffer—not only for herself, but most of all for others.

As time passed Alessandro Duse developed a certain passion for painting, though unfortunately painting was not attracted to him with the same passion. However, there are in existence a few of his pictures, inferior works of art that bring no special credit or honour to his name. Yet certainly he who was the father of Eleonora had no need of other fame. For every Italian, and in fact every sensitive soul the world over, the knowledge that such a creature once lived is a reason for pride in the human race, a new faith in the ability of mankind to overcome self and, putting aside all obstacles, to climb to the topmost rung of the ladder.

When a man has been responsible for the bringing of an Eleonora Duse into the world, he has given to the artistic and intellectual life, not only in his own country but in all countries, a greater contribution than if he had created a masterpiece of art—for his creature in turn creates infinite masterpieces.

The first programme on which her name appears bears the date of 1863, and was for the Nobile Teatro, Zara. Her mother played small parts in the company,

and her father also. The company was managed by her uncle, Enrico Duse.

Chioggia, where she always liked to believe that she was born, perhaps because it was the place where the Duse family were best known, was where she made her first appearance on the stage. The little city was grateful to Alessandro Duse, and to show its gratitude gave the name of Eleonora Duse to one of the principal streets. Ermete Novelli in his "Memoirs" refers to a trip to Chioggia, and his joy in finding in the picturesque city a souvenir to the greatness of dramatic art.

Ermete Novelli in his youth played for two and a half years with the Luigi Duse Company.

From the age of four the life of Eleonora Duse was a mere existence in the most miserable poverty, which showed only too plainly in the pale, thin little face, the mysterious expression in the already marvellous eyes, and the poor garments that sparsely covered the delicate body.

In the evening, when she was not acting, her father and mother generally left her alone in their room, without light, owing to the cost of candles, while they went to join the company at the theatre. The solitude and darkness frightened her, so frequently she crawled out of the window on to the roof, preferring to be cold, close to her friends the stars, where she could imagine all kinds of wonderful things, rather than to await the return of her parents, trembling with fear, in a corner of the dark room.

When fourteen she played the leading rôle in an antique romantic tragedy, "Gaspara Stampa," at Dolo, in a tiny cabin-like country theatre. The frail childish voice, hardly heard beyond the front rows, was continually forced by someone whispering from the wings: "Louder! louder!"

Gaspara despaired, went into delirious spasms, not knowing or understanding why. The poor little

mind, with a superhuman instinct, searched and found the right accents and shrieks to move the crowd of spectators, who were supplying—poorly—her daily bread.

At that time only the mother realised the reason for the tears, sobs, maddening fatigue and moments of horror that the child passed through. Only the mother had pity for her suffering, for she alone was able to take the tired little body into her loving arms, and by her caresses calm the nervous trembling. Only her tears were ever mingled with those of Eleonora.

With the mother's arms about her she would plead for guidance and help. The mother who also had suffered knew better than she what must be done in order to face life bravely ; the mother had known misery, ruin, and had found heroic force, pity ; she had passed through horror to the limit of death—and even more.

Perhaps to-day l'Osteria del Vampa at Dolo is still in existence, and no doubt one could sit on the same bench before the table where Eleonora Duse, after a performance at Dolo, sat with her mother, to eat her humble supper. Maybe the owner, wiping his hands on a once white apron, would recount how his father had known and talked intimately with the little girl of the pale face and great mysterious eyes, who, when the food was set before her, looked into space, as though living over again the scenes that she had been acting, from time to time drinking feverishly from a glass of water ; the movement of the small delicate hand fascinating those who watched her, as did the indefinable something noble in her face.

He will, no doubt, if you insist, tell you how distant from her surroundings she seemed, even from the patient mother, who gently pleaded with her to eat, and how she seemed to come back to earth long enough to reply : " Wait " ; how when the mother, too tired

to wait longer, would pay for the untouched food, the girl, stuffing a huge piece of common bread in her pocket, would go away with her.

The fortune of the Duse family, almost from the time of Eleonora's birth, had been going backwards instead of forwards, and when she was still a mere child the greatest misfortune of all, the illness of her mother, came upon them.

Shortly after she was fourteen, the age of a wholesome school-girl, her mother was so ill that she was forced to go into a hospital. Eleonora's one desire was to be near enough to aid in the nursing, and yet in order to live herself she was obliged to act.

Whenever possible she went out early in the mornings to the open country, and there in the solitude would eat the bread that she had carried away from the restaurant the evening before. If there was not time enough before the rehearsal for a long walk, she contented herself with a visit to the statues in the park ; and it is to the classic poses of those statues that she later owed her plastic grace.

In the afternoons her free time was spent at her mother's bedside in the hospital. And the young mother, knowing only too well the conditions of the little family, never forgot to set aside half of her soup, furnished by the hospital, for her daughter. This poor excuse for a meal was all the food the child had until the following day.

A growing girl, doing a woman's work, and living on liquid nourishment that would have been insufficient for a baby !

Her one real joy in life, that of being where she could continually see the beloved mother, was eventually taken away from her. In order to live she had to act, and acting meant travelling from one part of Italy to another.

Fear in her heart, the longing for the beloved one

burning like a cruel fire into her very soul, she set off on the journey, the memory of her mother's last kiss and a tiny locket containing her picture her only possessions.

Eleonora Duse was playing in Verona with a cheap little road company when her mother died in Bologna. She was not quite fifteen.

The leading man kindly handed her the telegram announcing the mother's death at the end of the second act. With a superhuman effort she forced herself to remain calm, as before the curious company she did not wish to show her grief, nor must the public during the remainder of the performance notice that there was anything wrong with her.

With a toss of the head worthy of a much older person, she defiantly pushed out her chin, clasped the thin arms firmly, disdainfully raised her eyebrows in order to force back the tears. . . . The performance over, she never quite remembered how she got away from the theatre; enough that she was alone, far from prying eyes. . . .

She ran, as fast as her tired legs would carry her, towards the house where she lived with her father, to shut herself in the tiny room, where with her face pressed close to the pillow she could cry her heart out in peace.

It was winter, and the snow was falling fast. The tiny actress ran courageously, close to the walls of the houses of the lonely street, whispering imploringly : "Mamma ! Mamma !" When only a few steps from the house, she put her cold hands into the pockets of the old coat she was wearing, and suddenly realised that one pocket was longer than the other. . . . In an instant, because of the contact, and the memory it brought of the woman who, only a few weeks before, ill in bed, dying perhaps, had sewed the pocket so, all physical force left her. Only a few steps from the

house, alone in the deserted street, leaning helplessly against a wall for support, she began to tremble and sob. The fearful darkness enveloped her ; the delicate hands holding tightly to the lining of the pocket seemed to touch the hands of the beloved mother gone from her forever.

Poor little Eleonora, alone as she had never been before, the loneliness daily, hourly becoming more poignant, continued on her difficult way, never complaining, always aloof from those who, had they cared, might have been able to alleviate her suffering, or in some way to have helped her.

She, who in after life was destined to help so many, never once asked help for herself, even when the most difficult problem that ever confronted her came ; she remained aloof from her companions.

She had no money to buy a black dress as an outward and visible sign of her inward mourning, and was forced to continue to wear the rags that she possessed, merely putting a black crêpe band on her sleeve, which to her at least showed that someone near and dear was gone.

In the midst of her suffering she heard her companions whispering with disdain about her indifference to her mother's death.

"That child certainly has no heart," one woman in the company said loud enough for her to hear ; "she isn't even wearing mourning for her mother !"

"I—" another remarked, an actress who played the grand sentimental rôles, "—everybody surely knows that I am honest ; still, if I were in her place, I would sell myself rather than not have the money to buy a black dress !"

Despite the suggestions of the other women of the company, Eleonora continued to wear the coloured dress, which fortunately was not vivid. . . . And a few days later, going home to the furnished room, she

found her father in a rage ; furiously waving a letter at her, he exclaimed :

“ Listen ! An uncle has died in Chioggia, and left me 10,000 lire ! Think of it, now we have money—now that she’s gone ! But we don’t want it, do we, Eleonora ? We don’t want to enjoy what she never had ! ”

Without a moment’s hesitation Eleonora agreed with her father, though the money was a fortune for them and would have been the means of her having the mourning clothes that she so longed for.

“ Send it back, father,” she replied simply. “ We are well, and we can work.” And the inheritance was refused.

During all of Eleonora Duse’s life there were many such refusals, when the money offered would have meant just as much as it did to her then ; even up to the last year before she left for London.

Eleonora Duse’s childhood, as I have said, was spent in the most hopeless misery, as like a gypsy she was dragged about from one town to another, her only education, apart from the little that her mother had been able to teach her, derived from the parts she played, or heard.

How was it possible for the mind to develop with the body so poorly nourished ? And yet the mind did grow, not in proportion to the body, but far beyond it ; for, only a short time after her mother’s death, she began to attract attention in the theatrical world by the singular manner in which she read her lines. . . . She seemed, so early critics said, to dominate a certain fatigue, almost an annoyance, or distaste for life. Her eyes at times had the expression of one lost in space, vague, indefinite—at other times she gave the impression of a person looking beyond herself, as though expecting something from above,

something unknown, but of which the presentiment was there present.

Without the intense nature of her mother no doubt she would never have become "The Duse," and without the vigilance of her father she would probably have been consumed before her time.

When, at fourteen, the manager tried to force the blooming of the delicate, already too precocious flower, her father protested, even refused to shake the tree in order to have the fruit fall, preferring to have the fruit ripen naturally by the sun's rays. When she was threatened by the manager's wrath, he never failed to interfere.

"Let my daughter alone," he would say, "if she doesn't want to repeat the lines—when the stairs are lighted she'll go alone. Leave her in peace now, Poveretta! She's Smara!"

This Smara is the demon of the night, the spleen of Venice, the spleen which envelops the past in a fantastic mist of sadness, the bitterness of the present, and the uncertainty of the future—as the lagoon fogs unite the earth, sea and sky under a weird grey veil.

The Smara explains all without defining anything, and can come from any cause. . . . With her it was sometimes the mere idea of playing for the money to buy a bit of bread, at others the artistic temperament was bruised by the miserable frame surrounding her, the frame which so little resembled her ideal. Her vulgar companions, the mud above which her very soul cried out, brought on the Smara, and at such times she pronounced certain words with difficulty; and the sentiments that she could not prove, or those that she would not profane, weighed heavily upon her.

Her progress in Art was never rapid or easy, and until 1873 or 1874 she seems to have remained entirely in the dark—lonely, unhappy, and often hungry.

When she was still in short skirts, at Piacenza, a provincial city not far from Milan, together with another member of the same company, Libero Pilotto, who afterwards became famous as actor and author, she stole a slice of polenta (a sort of cornmeal bread), in order to have the strength to play that evening the lover's tragedy of "Romeo and Juliet."

And in that same play only a few months later, at Verona, she had what must be considered her first success, in that the intimation of real talent, the art of conception and execution, was first noted in her interpretation of Juliet.

"A find," the critics called her, "a veritable rose find." In a subtle action, a moment's work, the aristocratic touch of genius had been reflected again and again to the enthusiastic public. . . . "*Trovata di rose*" (rose find) the papers of that time spoke of her. Managers became alert, and not a few leading ladies began looking anew to their laurels. The *Revue de Paris*, 1874, wrote :

"A real ray of sunlight of a sudden brightened the scene, miraculously diffusing with the glow of the drama that Italian glimmer that the poet with his marvellous divination had felt. The greatness of Shakespeare was all there in the person of Juliet. She, the Duse, had probably spent all her little savings to buy roses—pale roses with delicate tender shadings, roses more deeply tinted, passionate roses ; but always pink. . . . How could she have been Juliet without those roses in her hands ? They were her talisman, her fascination—and they gave her poise.

"She played her part deliciously, with those long-stemmed roses in her arms—sometimes close to her face, the delicate perfume seeming to inebriate her ; at other moments pressed close to her heart, as though to still the rapid beating there. . . . Then Romeo appeared : their eyes met ; the roses trembled visibly

in Juliet's hands, one loosened from the bunch fell at her feet. In order to remain a moment longer with Romeo she stooped slowly ; he anticipated her, picked up the rose, and without a word offered it, his eyes fixed on hers. . . . Off stage the mother called sharply—Juliet in fear ran from the scene, with the rose that her lover had touched held close to her heart.

"When the sun turned towards the west Juliet was at the window, her hands again full of roses, she herself no less a flower than they—ready to burst into full bloom. Will love or death pluck her? Romeo appears—he approaches, is under the balcony. She pulls the roses nervously to pieces, and lets the petals fall slowly on his upturned brow. This subtle declaration of her love affects him as the perfume had inebriated her.

"The drama unfolded with the poetry of the hour, accompanied by a mysterious, almost musical harmony. The curtain rose again, and we were at the last scene. The dim lights flickered sadly ; weirdly illuminating the cemetery. The lark no longer raised her joyous song to the heavens, instead the ill-fated bats of the night were in the air, swooping down maliciously to batter their wings against the resisting walls, and sending cries of anguish into the stillness of the night. . . . Juliet was reposing on a bed of flowers, Romeo at her feet. In order to awaken him, as in the balcony scene, she scattered the soft petals over him, until he was covered as by a shroud—then she dropped beside the beloved corpse, in the midst of the flowers that for one short day had blossomed for them alone."

Her artistic instinct had found the dominating note of the roses, that joined so harmoniously the first to the supreme tryst—united love with death.

This idea of the flowers, and their indestructible

value; remained one of the salient points during all Eleonora Duse's long theatrical career.

When the footlights were out, and the crowd dispersed, Juliet got up from her grave trembling. The moon shone with splendour lighting the arena with the clearness of day. Too excited to go home, the young girl walked about the streets, her father, respecting her need for silence, following her without a word. For hours she walked without an idea of direction, dreamingly, towards the future.

The clocks of Verona struck the hour of midnight, and at last the father spoke :

“ Let's go and have supper, little girl ! ”

She let him take her home, and wearily dropped on her bed. The impression produced by the drama had been too great. The garret, poverty, all disappeared. She had become Juliet, and in some way had found the means of arriving at the height necessary to pass from real life to the superiority of poetical creation, and she had understood the grandness of the sentiment of love.

It is impossible to say at exactly what age she made the first true impression, for early biographers recount that in 1874 or 1875 she was with the Duse-Lagunaz Company as the youngest ingénue. This company was managed by Luigi Aliprandi, an actor of note; and Celestina Paladini, who much later married Flavio Andò, was the leading woman.

The fact that at fourteen, when her actions could not have been guided by previous experience, she was able to interpret a difficult part like Juliet, as she did, shows the innate refinement and talent which she possessed, and that her work from the very beginning was that of purest inspiration.

The Benincasa Company came next, then that of Luigi Pezzana, where her life was not a bed of roses ;

for her artistic personality had begun to assert itself, and was entirely in contrast to that of the star, an actor indifferent to all conventionalities of dramatic art.

With such a company, the life and work of the girl, who was already beginning to have her own ideas, were constantly disturbed by rebuffs and infinite discussions in the endeavour to belittle her.

Pezzana has gone down in history as a prophet because of a remark that he made to Eleonora in a moment of anger.

They were playing at Fano, a small city on the Adriatic coast, and were rehearsing a new comedy. In the middle of the scene Pezzana interrupted the Duse, then second woman of the company, to correct her.

"That line doesn't go so!" he spoke brusquely; "it goes *so*!" And he repeated the line in his own way.

Eleonora had a certain pride in her own ideas, and did not intend to be corrected when she knew she was in the right, so replied quite calmly that she meant to read her lines as she thought best, and that if he didn't like it he could find someone else. Pezzana flew into a rage, and yelled at her:

"Why don't you quit trying to be an actress, anyway? Can't you understand that the theatrical profession isn't bread for your teeth? Better find another business where you'll have more chance!"

From a spiritual point of view her childhood and girlhood were worse than drab. Children above all things are joyous, have a clear illuminating vision of life—they laugh and sing at their play, sending their glad ringing voices into the limpid air about them. The loving arms of the mother are ever ready to receive them, to caress and comfort. Eleonora



ALESSANDRO DUSE.
The father of Eleonora.



ELEONORA DUSE AND HER MOTHER.
At the time of her first stage appearance.
p. 30.

Duse knew nothing of the tender care that other girls have—the little pale face never smiled, except on the stage; her big eyes were melancholy, her mouth drawn with an expression of pain. . . . The loneliness, indigence, uncertainty of the morrow, added to the lack of tenderness, at times terrified her; and she was continually preparing herself to confront life unaided, without comfort. . . . In those days she never pretended to herself, as any other girl might have done, that the future appeared other than a miserable existence, as the past had been.

Though the actual date remains uncertain, with the "rose find" we have the real beginning of her glorious career. At four her name first appeared in print; at fourteen she was a small personality—very small, but a personality; at twenty-four acclaimed the leading actress in Italy; and not more than ten years later she ranked among the world's greatest stars.

Without doubt it was a rose find, but was the delightful effect obtained, in which the rose was practically the protagonist, due to chance or understanding? Was the rose dropped consciously by her? It seems likely that the first revelation of greatness in the actress was also the revelation of the budding woman, which afterlife was to demonstrate greater than her art, great as that was, for from the first promise to the full revelation there was no suspension, no retreat—the actress grew apace with the woman.

The next step noted was at Terni, in "Alcibiade," by Felice Cavaletti. The part of Timandra was played by an actress called Marchi, who, one evening, owing to illness, was obliged to abandon her rôle. The public insisted upon the continuation of the spectacle, and after due consideration Eleonora Duse consented to put on Timandra's Greek costume. . . .

The public lost nothing by the substitution, and the seventeen-year-old actress had a reasonable success.

After Pezzana she was successively with Icilie Brunatti, Ettore Dondini, and Adolfe Drago. In 1878 she had her first important engagement with the Ciotti-Belli Blanes Company, in which she played second leads with the Piomonti, and the Pasquali. Others in the company well known in Italy at that time were Giacinta Pezzana, Majeroni, and Emanuel.

The spontaneousness and sincerity of diction and the intelligence with which she played the numerous and varied parts was attracting attention, though at Trieste it seems that times were still hard, for during a short season there the manager more than once called her aside to advise her to pay more attention to her work, as "the public couldn't see her with a microscope."

These reproofs hurt and humiliated her, and added another thorn to the crown of misery that she wore patiently. It hurt her sensibility to know that the public for which she worked so hard failed to appreciate her. . . . On her face the inward suffering left its trace in a profound, almost unearthly beauty, a beauty something beyond the physical traits that the world is accustomed to recognise.

Never at any time of her life was Eleonora Duse considered beautiful, but she was, from the beginning to the end, mystic.

Still with the same company at the Fiorentini Theatre, Naples, during the illness of the leading woman, whom she understudied, she was able to go on in the part of Maia in Augier's play. The rôle gave Eleonora a magnificent opportunity to show artistic qualities, different from the conventional acting that the theatregoers were accustomed to.

So original and fine was her performance that Giovanni Emanuel, a theatrical genius, and fortunately

a spectator that evening, took the matter to the Princess Santobuono, and insisted upon her aiding him to form a new company for Giacinta Pezzana and Eleonora Duse.

The original plan was to star the Duse in the play in which she had made such an unforgettable impression, and in which the part of Maia seemed to have entered into the very soul of the valiantly promising young actress. Just why this plan was never carried out still remains a professional secret, an unvealable mystery of the Italian stage.

Notwithstanding the praise of the Press, and the public's continued calls for the Duse, the management only permitted her to appear once every two or three weeks, as though wilfully neglecting or endeavouring to make the public forget her.

After Maia she played with credit Ofelia and Eletta in "Oreste," and at last, in 1879, Teresa Raquin with Giacinta Pezzana in Naples.

When the new Zola play was taken by the company, the Pezzana selected the elderly part, and that of the young Teresa was given to the Duse.

With the rare intensity for which she afterwards became famous, the budding actress in her studied and rehearsed the difficult part; the manuscript, from the time it was given her until the opening night, scarcely ever out of her sight. One of the numerous notices show that the study was rewarded.

This, the distinguished critic wrote after speaking at length of the success of the Pezzana :

"The other imposing creation was that of Eleonora Duse as Teresa. The magnificent triumph of last evening will never be forgotten by those who witnessed her. As I write I see her again in the simple black dress, leaning with rare abandon against the window, distracted, far from her surroundings. . . . Then when Teresa in her bridal robe and veil is frightened and

clings to Lorenzo, in whom love no longer overcomes remorse ; when horrified she sees the portrait of the murderer Camille, and with terrified eyes, trembling and unable to speak, she shows it to Lorenzo ; in the scene of fierce reproach, when she grasps the chair for a support—and in the last act, when love has turned to ferocious hatred, and the paralysed mother smiles implacably at the two culprits, cold chills ran up and down one's spine. Shudders of horrible suffering too deep for tears completely subjugated the soul, taking away from one, momentarily, the courage to applaud."

The old custody of the " Fiorentini " was heard to say as the crowd flocked out of the theatre :

" Signuri, chesta è Essa " (that's She, gentlemen !)

Naples saw the reward of her long years of continued hard work, and Naples saw also her first and greatest woman's anguish. There she knew and lived through the hours of her great young love, and the too-human suffering that followed. Hours that fortunately meet never to return. Happiness knocked lightly on her door—then hurried by !

In Naples she knew Martino Cafiero, a young journalist, fascinating, intelligent and elegant. Up to the time of meeting with Cafiero her life had practically been passed among the people of her own class—actors ; many of them kind and generous to her—but they were not what the romantic heart of a young girl pictured as the ideal man. In Cafiero's very elegance she saw something different, felt the first woman's passion stir in her.

In his position as a newspaper man he had free access to the theatre, for the rehearsals as well as the performance. He was a man, young. The big, serious eyes of the little actress called to him across the footlights ; the sweet, fresh voice was continually in his ears ; and no doubt he would not have taken a

young society girl as he did the lonely Eleonora ; no doubt he would have respected a girl in a superior position, one who had a family or someone to take care of her. But he was gay and care-free—when he laughed the world laughed with him ; he was sought after, and copied by other newspaper men ; women fell easily for his charms—so what wonder that Eleonora Duse, who knew so little of life, and nothing of love, should have fallen where those wiser than she had fallen before her ?

He tormented her waking hours, and even her dreams, for weeks ; hope and despair alternating and keeping her continually in a nervous state that may in a way have accounted for her success in Teresa Raquin.

Then the joy came. He loved her, loved the hitherto drab unknown actress. . . . She had been acting love for a long time ; men had held her in their arms, kissed her with passion ; but it had never been real, the passion had been for the person she represented, not for her—the woman. Juliet had been madly loved by Romeo—more wonderful and handsome than she had dreamed he could be.

From the time that Cafiero became her lover dates the awakening of the woman. In physical love and passion she had found herself. With him she was jealous and happy by turn. His ardent caresses satisfied her sensual desires, and left her nervous and unsatisfied when alone.

She adored him, and gave him her all : her youth and purity, and had no desire to be free, for to her freedom meant other men. If he had to be free that was for another mistress, or perhaps a wife—for at that time he had no wish to marry her. From that deduction began the torment.

When they were alone in the modest furnished room that she occupied and she was close in his arms,

his kisses showering on her, she forgot the pain and doubt, and gave herself up to the feminine joy of feeling herself his body and soul, to the joy of possessing him.

Sometimes, after several hours of ardent love, he would leave her at the theatre and go off with his friends, not to see her until the following day. These were the evenings that she played with more assurance, for, with her lips still burning from his kisses, she was able to put a deeper meaning into the passionate scenes of the play; on the occasions when she had not seen him all day, full of doubt as to his honesty and loyalty, she would go listlessly to her work, and frequently be unable to enter into the rôle forced upon her.

If after the performance he strolled into her dressing-room, in a fury of mad love and jealousy she would throw herself recklessly into his arms, laughing and crying at the same time, and not until he took her on his lap and assured her that he loved her more than all the world would she be happy again.

Her joy over the coming of the baby knew no bounds, for not only was she to be a mother, but the child would bind him to her forever.

But Fate willed it otherwise. The baby, a boy, died very young. His death for a time completely prostrated her, and with a new passion almost of desperation she turned to Cafiero. Turned to him, only to lose him, for while their love was still in the realm of the ideal, Martino Cafiero also died. His death following so closely the loss of the adored baby almost unbalanced her mind.

The wee little thing gone from her for ever. . . . The death of the man she loved; a desperation verging on suicide, when all through one night she walked the streets, maddened by the atrociousness of her

anguish—and from that anguish the tragedienne that all the world eventually applauded was born.

The very cruelty of life dazzled her, and was a continual revelation of herself to herself. Natural pride developed, and all the coquetry necessary to attract attention and success.

She took herself seriously in hand, disciplining the forces that Nature had endowed her with.

Notwithstanding the success of Teresa Raquin the Duse was not yet held in great consideration in the Rossi company. Teobaldo Marchetti, one of the lesser lights, except in character parts, where his make-up always attracted attention, saw in the young nervous girl possibilities that were ignored by the managers and public.

"That Duse girl has a fortune ahead," he told Rossi one day. "You ought to keep on giving her a chance."

"She's too skinny and underfed-looking," Rossi complained. "To be great in Art a woman has to be beautiful. Do you expect the public to pay just to see her?"

"She made good in Juliet when she was little more than a baby, so to speak. She made good in Teresa Raquin. Give her a chance, I tell you!"

However, Rossi had more experienced women in the company and was not quite ready to follow the far-seeing advice.

Marchetti—who acted under the name of Teobaldo Checchi—like Eleonora Duse, was born of poor travelling actors, and like her was possessed of innate refinement. His constant observation of her acting convinced him that in her very indolence and distraction lay the charm of the sleeping talent, which the recent suffering had only to a certain extent awakened.

While watching and studying her he became aware of the mental tragedy that she was passing through.

He pitied her, then loved her.

They were married at Florence in 1881.

As an actor he was never distinguished other than in the part of Veuillard, in "Rabagas," by Sardou. He was an intelligent and far-seeing man, and an excellent advance agent. Supported by Icilio Polese, manager of "Arte Dramatica," he was of inestimable use to his wife, in that he forced her with proper tact upon the public.

After the fortunate appearance in Teresa Raquin, Eleonora Duse's name began to be on the lips of all theatre-goers, and the New Year found her engaged with Cesare Rossi, a great actor of the old school, but with modern ideas and the youthful force to put them through. With him she was the second leading woman—Giacinta Pezzana the first—in other words, she alternated with the Pezzana.

In Venice she played "Fernande," by Sardou. In the part of Georgene she created the impression of a fantastic apparition, a phenomenon. . . . Never in the innermost soul of a critic could the hope have been found to hear lines read on any stage as she read them: agitated, disturbed, with quick bursts of passion; plastic, spontaneous! There was more than presentiment, more than confidence. She put life into inanimate objects, absorbed the vitality of the living. . . . With a quick perception she turned the words and phrases to the other's reasoning. In a look or a smile, an "oh!" or an "ah!" the intense word, the prolonged silence, a step forward, a movement of the hand—the hands of infinite expression. . . . The greatness of Georgene on the stage was Eleonora Duse, who, without doubt, even to herself, was Georgene. . . . Her eyes, mouth, gestures; her voice, pure diction . . . in fact, the entire interpretation detached her from the others.



ELEONORA DUSE.

From a photo taken at Barcelona about 1886-7.



ELEONORA DUSE.
As "Teresa Raquin."

The masterly performance of Giacinta Pezzana, richly spontaneous, the robust, alluring voice that had the power to thrill any audience, uplifting even the topmost gallery to the point of delirium, for some unknown reason retired into insignificance before that of the little Duse.

After "Fernande" Giacinta Pezzana remained the classic actress, but Eleonora Duse, who had opened the way for a new method of acting, with Latin enthusiasm was acclaimed by the progressive Italians.

"It is not surprising that you are restless and agitated," her parents had often told her; "you are a child of 1859, and war is in your veins."

1859 was the era of the patriotic awakening in Italy, when the Milanese opened the way to their French liberators, and when the young Italy was obsessed by the fever of growth—which has lasted ever since.

Youth desired an actress who belonged to youth. There was change, progress, in the new generation coming forward. Eleonora Duse was the one who could feel joy and suffering, ambition, dreams, illusions, disillusion; the desire of agitated life, tormented, nervous, giddy; and she was the actress they wanted.

A few months later, realising the sentiments of his public, Cesare Rossi made her the absolute leading woman of his company.

With Rossi and Emanuel she toured triumphantly most of Italy. Her repertoire included "Sorellina," "Odette," "Teodora," "Divorcons," "Pameta," "Gli Innamorati," "Fedora," "Amore Senza Stima," "Fernande," and the Goldoni play, "La Locandiera," which remained one of her favourite interpretations.

The following year Eleonora Duse, then Signora Checchi, was at the Carignano Theatre, Turin, with the Cesare Rossi Company as the leading woman,

playing without enthusiasm the mediocre plays of the Italian repertoire, or bad French translations, generally to half-empty houses, even though the seats were sold at a modest price.

More than once after a performance, physically and mentally exhausted by the force which she put into the work of trying to please the indifferent public, she dropped in her dressing-room more dead than alive. A moment later the secretary probably brought her the cheering news that her part of the receipts for the evening's performance amounted to twenty-seven lire and fifty centimes.

Discouraged over the way things were going, she brooded continually, and had almost decided to leave the stage, when the arrival of Sarah Bernhardt was announced at the Carignano Theatre; the Italian company to give place to the French for the duration of the great artist's stay in Turin.

Immediately preparations for the reception of the grand Sarah began. Everything behind the scenes was completely done over, with the hope of having a place worthy of the artist beloved of the gods. . . . The Duse's modest little dressing-room was transformed into a reasonably pretentious boudoir. . . . For eight days there was a continual procession of luggage between the theatre and hotel. A menagerie preceded the grand Domppteuse: dogs, monkeys, parrots, and the fallows which she had brought back from another voyage accompanied her on this tour.

The astonishment of the simple Italians who helped with the unpacking of the exotic curiosities knew no bounds, and Eleonora—instead of feeling a natural jealousy over the extensive preparations for the triumph of another—was merely filled with a legitimate pride.

"At last," she said with sincere conviction, "there is one woman who has been able to raise our

business above the mundane, who leads the mass to the respect of the beautiful, and obliges them to bow before Art."

Sarah finally appeared. . . . "I am here—look and listen!" she seemed to say as she took possession of the stage, and the audience assembled to render her the deserved homage.

The boxes cost one hundred lire, an unheard-of price for Turin, where generally five lire bought the best place in any theatre. Every box and seat in the house was sold in advance.

The Duse followed each performance with intense interest. Like the others—more than the others no doubt—ravished by Sarah's talent, seduced by her charm. She was untiring in her applause, vibrating with the actress, whose words she did not understand, almost as though she herself were saying them.

In the art of the famous woman—admirable, profound, magnificent, clean-cut, at times inimitable—Eleonora saw, as in a glass, the reflection of her own inward strength. The execution of an occult idea, which to some might seem an audacious unconsciousness, in her was the consciousness of pure force.

Several evenings after the departure of the glorious Bernhardt, who had left behind her a luminous trail, in the light of which Eleonora still lingered, the Italian troupe again took its place at the Carignano. . . . The ever-prudent Rossi, for fear of the still vivid memories of the Frenchwoman, proposed to give an old play by Gherardo da Testa, "*Il Trionfo d'Adelaide*."

The Duse protested.

"If I play to-morrow evening," she said resolutely, "it will be something that Turin is not already tired of."

"And that is . . . ?" Rossi was astonished at the unusual courage expressed by the hitherto timid leading woman.

“ ‘The Princess of Bagdad.’ ”

“ Hm ! you think you can make a hit in that after the grand Sarah ? ”

“ Precisely. In any case, she didn’t play ‘The Princess of Bagdad’ here ; and I merely mean to profit by the sympathetic wave that she established between the stage and the stalls.”

“ But——”

“ If you don’t want me to play the Princess——”

“ Which was hooted in Paris ! ”

“ All the more reason !—I shall quit you ! ”

“ And where will you go ? ”

“ Chi lo sa ? ” (Who knows ?)

And she played “The Princess of Bagdad,” thereby inaugurating the long, though frequently interrupted series of her triumphs—the first step of the glorious march.

The Italians, awakened by Sarah, watched the scene with more attention than they had ever given a dramatic spectacle, as in general they were in the habit of using the theatre for a meeting-place more than a place of amusement.

“ I also am here,” she said to her inmost soul. “ I also.” And later the crowd took up the cry : “ She also is here ! She also—and she belongs to us ! ” And they were proud—proud to know that in the not distant future they would have an actress in Italy who could hold her own with the great glory of France.

From then on Eleonora Duse was continually in the limelight, and very soon after appeared in Rome.

Count Primoli wrote in May, 1881, to Alexandre Dumas :

“ Last evening I had the victory that I have long waited for. ‘The Princess of Bagdad’ has triumphed in every sense of the word. The play has been presented frequently by mediocre actors for more than

a month with little success, until yesterday a young actress forced it upon a refractory public, and constrained them to bow before your work, and to applaud with enthusiasm the most daring and risqué lines."

After going into details as to the acting, and comparing the Duse with the Croizette, who first created the part of Lionnette, he closes the letter :

" I can imagine what the beautiful Croizette must be in this rôle, and I rejoice at the thought of applauding her next autumn. But despite the fact that in Paris you are used to perfection, for love of justice I wish that the name of Eleonora Duse reach you. The manner in which she interprets you, and makes one understand, renders her worthy of this honour."

To which Dumas replied :

" I had already received a letter from Rossi announcing the success of ' The Princess of Bagdad,' but I mistrusted the chief comedian of an Italian company, the natural rival of another. Your letter proves that he told the truth, and I am very happy for it. I do not understand why the Romans should not understand a play of this sort, for people used to the Last Judgment can easily support certain tableaux.

" Despite the difficulty of the first performance of the ' Princess ' in Paris, the receipts for the following forty have amounted to 243,000 francs—in other words : 6,000 francs per performance. . . . You will undoubtedly see it in the autumn.—Yours, etc.,

" ALEXANDRE DUMAS."

And Cesare Rossi received the following :

" DEAR MR. ROSSI,—With your letter I also received one from my young friend X, repeating the

announcement of your great success, and that of Mlle. Duse. Will you be my interpreter to this beautiful person, whose talent is '*hors ligne*,' my friend says, and who in this rôle has shown audacious splendour, which benefits her as well as the author?

"It is necessary to have artists such as she to make the public understand a work that is out of the ordinary. . . . I am more than astonished and gratified by the success at Rome. The Italian warmth seems to me to be a natural accompaniment for such a subject. You have put everything in its place, and I am very proud and grateful. . . . With this letter I am sending two brochures for you and Mlle. Duse.

"I hear that you are likely to come to Paris soon. I shall indeed be glad to clasp your hand, and, if you play, to applaud you.

"Thanking you again, etc.,

"ALEXANDRE DUMAS."

This letter was published in several daily papers, and was the means of the Duse's entire consecration to Italy.

At Turin, towards the end of 1881, after she had passed through a long period of cruel suffering, mental and physical, which for a time had kept her from the theatre, Cesare Rossi, confident that her nervousness was a result of recent emotions, seeing her undecided which way to turn, offered to keep her with him exclusively for the grande emotional rôles. Still suffering, she accepted, without believing that she could keep to her word, and signed the contract—as she herself put it—the way one signs a note that one is sure not to be able to meet, and knowing that, when it falls due, the only way to pay it will be to commit suicide.

The old actor was not mistaken in his diagnosis.

Art called Eleonora Duse back to life ; her greatness was again proclaimed.

She became what she was without passing through the usually agreed conventionalities. A simple cry from the heart had made her, for she had done nothing more than study herself, transforming her own life into the rôle she played. She knew that what was missing in the part she could replace by art and truth. She had no souvenir of what she had never been taught, but she remembered what she had suffered. Her talent was made of flesh and blood, nourished by the misery of childhood, and the trials of youth.

With impenetrable reserve she kept her private life secret, only on the stage permitting herself the luxury of opening her heart, full to overflowing with tortured desires.

To hear her cast reproach at her companion—husband, lover, father, as the case might be—was enough to know that she had been wounded to the quick, and that the words in the mouth of the heroine were merely an echo from her own heart—a *leit motive* of grief which chained the betrayal to the promise, the denouncement to the prologue.

Pity, anger, vengeance, and most of all her pardon, were all sentiments worth listening to. Even in youth she had learned the greatness of pardon, which time was to mellow and make more beautiful.

The inward torture continued. Success had brought the glory that is rarely known in youth, but it had brought also a realisation of her ignorance as a woman. Eleonora Duse had suffered physically all her life, known want, and all kinds of deprivation, from the day of her birth. She had loved, given her soul as well as her pure young body to the man of her heart—and death had cruelly taken him from her. She had been a mother, only to lose the child before her arms had even become accustomed to holding him. . . .

Another baby had come to her, a girl, in lawful wedlock, but her wandering, uncertain life made it impossible to keep the child with her, so the loving arms were empty. . . . Her husband?—he was her husband.

To have a continual pain in one's heart that made it possible to understand the suffering of others, and to be able to put that suffering over the footlights—was that enough to make a great actress? No! she answered to herself. One must have an inner life worth while, some fund to fall back on. The mind must be cultivated; one must read and study the thoughts of others in order to have something to think about one's self.

From then on, about 1882, until the last days of her life the Duse gave all her free time to reading, and much of the money that might have been put aside for a rainy day was spent on books. If she saw a book in a shop window with an alluring cover, no matter in what language it was written, she would buy it, and not many years ago she purchased a book in Hindu, because there was a picture of Rabindranath Tagore on the first page, and the likeness of the Hindu poet seemed to her the symbol of faith and moral beauty. For a long time she kept it where she could contemplate it every minute.

One of her very old actors recalls how at an early age he marvelled at her passion for reading, for many times on going into her room at an hotel he saw her flat on the floor, leaning on her elbows, a book before her, and many other books scattered about. On his entrance she would raise her eyes from the page before her, one finger marking the place, take off the rimmed glasses, and begin an animated discussion of the book she had been reading.

The continued unhopd-for success of "The Princess of Bagdad" gave the Duse the desire to try another

play by the same author, something that had perhaps already been forgotten in France.

Three motives drew her to the play "Claude's Wife": it had not been a success, the strangeness of it fascinated her, and the lovely French actress Desclée had created it.

One day by mere chance she came across the pages consecrated so delightfully, and to the best of his great ability, by Alexandre Dumas to his interpreter. . . . Little by little her sympathy went out to the poor Aimée, whom she had never seen, but whose character and talent, both as woman and artist, charmed her.

She had found the theatres in Turin, Florence and Naples still fresh with the success of the great unknown genius; she had breathed the same air breathed by the Desclée; played on the same stage, and occupied the same dressing-room—and so it seemed that a bit of the soul of the one who was gone had mysteriously passed into hers. . . . Also the Duse, who even at that time could not be compared with any other actress because of her inimitable qualities, as well as incorrigible faults, liked the idea of being near the Desclée, with, as a French writer said, this difference: "The Desclée was essentially Parisian, and the Duse had a universal soul."

There he erred, for if ever a woman's soul was exclusively Italian that woman was Eleonora Duse—only in Art was she universal.

This particular sympathy for the memory of Desclée went even to the extreme point of her being flattered when she was accused at times of a nasal voice, as the first wife in "Claude's Wife" had been reproached for the same defect. . . . This adoration of the martyr brought eventual happiness to the Duse.

"The dead," she insisted, "help the living. My mother has always helped me, otherwise"—unutterable

sadness veiled the brightness of her eyes for a moment whenever she mentioned her mother—"otherwise," she would repeat softly, "I wouldn't be here to-day."

As soon as it became generally known that Eleonora Duse intended giving "*Claude's Wife*," which no one had ventured to present after Desclée, a general murmur arose. Even those who had faith in her talent regretted her dissipating herself in a bad cause, but, persevering with her project, one by one she gathered the company together. . . . Count Primoli, who frequently assisted at the rehearsals, wrote :

"Not only did Cesarine seem the embodiment of the amorous panther" (as she was afterwards called), "but she was the help and inspiration of all the others, whose rôles she explained and literally played. . . . Never have I so completely understood this strange complicated work."

"Tutte le battute sono foderate," she said continually. "All the lines are lined, and to appreciate the play you must not look at the written words but at the words under them."

Cesarine as the part was written was perfidious, capricious, almost intolerable. Eleonora Duse's experience was limited ; nevertheless she won. The triumph was rousing, memorable ! Her Cesarine was no longer the violent female, unreasonable, perverse ; instead, there was something restless, ill, almost sweet, that sought pardon and love. . . . She was frantically applauded ; her future assured.

The poor little exile, with the great brown eyes the only light in the dun colour face, had truly become somebody, as her father and mother had so fondly

hoped. She to whom the soldiers had presented arms in a night had become the bird in a gilded cage to whom the public bowed, and later were to worship. . . . There would be no more poverty or wondering if she must go without a meal in order to have the money to buy a few flowers or a book—no more humiliations ; instead, respect, consideration from fellow actors, admiration from the crowds—glory !

Sarah Bernhardt's manager, Schurmann, who had accompanied her to Italy in 1881, saw Eleonora Duse at the Carignano, and was struck with her marvellous interpretation of the heroine in "Claude's Wife," and at once offered her a series of representations in the great cities of Europe. The Duse looked at him with stupor and replied :

"Either you're making fun of me, or you're singularly fooling yourself. I'm only a little Italian actress, and in a foreign country nobody would understand me. To force oneself on a public that does not know the language in which one speaks, one must have genius ; and I only have a little talent. Let me perfect my art, which I love passionately, and don't try to distract me from the life that I have chosen. . . . Later, if I succeed, and have sufficient faith in myself, we can speak of the matter again."

Before going to London with the Cesare Rossi Company, practically starved, she was in Florence rehearsing, and at that time conceived the idea of learning French. With the same fervour that she would have given to a new rôle, she dedicated herself to the study that, owing to lack of early instruction, was exceedingly difficult. Despite all that she had to overcome, in a very short time she had learned enough to follow the intellectual development of France, in the original. . . . She read, discussed, listened and learned. There

was no book that came under her hand that she did not devour—but not yet satisfied with her knowledge, she devoted herself to patient study, until such time as she was able to get the full enchantment and beauty out of each literary work. To her credit it must be added that she attained a perfect command of the language, which she spoke without accent. French was the only language which she spoke outside of her own.

Her readings, dating from 1880, included modern literature in every line—scientific, romantic, artistic ; above all artistic.

The Pezzana retired from the Rossi Company, and Eleonora Duse remained the only leading woman. It was her desire, even longing, to battle with the public by giving plays that no other actress had ever been able to render acceptable.

Italy was already overflowing with posters relating to the Duse. She was seen on the walls, board fences, and every place that a sign could be hung : standing ; sitting ; getting into a carriage ; biting the tip of her finger with a hand before her face to attract attention to her greatest beauty ; in crinoline, in Japanese costume, the latest Parisian mode ; alone, in company ; at work, at play.

Articles were being published in all the papers for and against her mode of acting ; questioning her private life, her way of dressing, doing her hair. Some called her a genius, others spoke of her as a *poseur* and said that her affectation was ruining dramatic art in Italy. . . . She had few friends at that time, and many enemies, mostly in the profession.

After the success of "The Princess of Bagdad" in Rome, and later "Claude's Wife," Alexandre Dumas inserted a note in his theatrical works that is a testimony to the consideration in which the famous writer held the great Italian interpreter of his works.

On page 84 of the edition mentioned, which is the last scene of "The Princess of Bagdad," there is the following note, that is not to be found in the other editions :

"After having said to her husband, 'I am innocent, I swear that I am, I swear that I am !' Leonette, seeing that her husband is still incredulous, rises again, places her hand on her son's head, and says a third time : 'I swear that I am innocent !' . . . This noble action was not followed in Paris. Neither Mlle. Croizette nor I had found it ; but it was irresistible. The mere line, no matter how potently read, could not have carried the same conviction. To the Duse, the admirable Italian actress, we owe this beautiful inspiration, which I have availed myself of for my revised edition, giving the merit and honour to her. . . . I have to thank her also, and I am more than glad to do it publicly, for having by her influence and talent entered two of my plays—'Claude's Wife' and 'The Princess of Bagdad'—in the Italian repertoire."

Success, glory, fame were beginning to come to her. Her art in its originality was a veritable revelation. Other actresses, who for years had dominated the Italian stage, swaying, thrilling, often deceiving their audiences, were disarmed before this mere girl, this new arrival. The great capitals of Europe, Africa and the two Americas accepted the affirmation of her greatness. She was proclaimed unique, the one actress in the world who was real, who convinced without artifice.

All this glory left the woman unchanged ; for before her, in her mind's eye, there was always something unattainable, something that perhaps did not exist but must be sought for just the same. . . . The far-away summit, invisible to the naked eye, wrapped in mystery and strange light, was her

ultimate goal, the magnet that drew her on and on and on.

"To be stationary in Art is to go back," was her motto ; and it was the woman in search of the unattainable who forced the actress to continue always the interminable march. . . . The height that she had then reached was only the first step of that march. No star in the firmament ever rests—so in Art there could be no repose ; for the celebrity of to-day is not the one of yesterday, nor of to-morrow.

There came a gradual change in her acting, a subtle transformation, due to the intellectual superiority, that may or may not have been temporarily detrimental to her.

At the beginning of her success her expression was such as one generally sees in nervous disorders, and is known to physicians as the nervous face. The eyes were agitated by imperceptible nervous tremors ; the colour changed from scarlet to pallor in a second ; the nostrils and lips twitched continually ; the teeth closed together violently, and all the facial muscles were constantly moving. The slight body moved with a serpentine grace of profound abandon, and synchronised perfectly with the actions and contortions of the arms, hands, fingers, chest and head. Owing to this natural nervousness she was unrivalled in nervous, hysterical parts.

At this particular time the annoyance, disrespect, hatred, fury, jealousy ; the simulation, dissimulation, objection, even death, aided in the artistic development of her temperament, much more than sweetness, tenderness, resignation, conviction, sincerity, or pain could have.

And the public began to reprove her for possessing only one note, for knowing only one type, instead of praising her for giving them what she was adapted to.

She knew only one type ! She, the woman of light and shade, of infinite caprices ; whose slightest gesture was worth more than ten lines spoken by any other actress before or after her ; she of the beautiful hands—the hands that played continually a rare symphony of movement. . . . Yes, she knew only one type : the woman who loved and suffered, the woman who divined the suffering of others and sympathised. . . . Quick in anger, and as quick to repent ; whose every sharp word was followed by two gentle ones ; an idealist, a dreamer, a seeker after knowledge ; modest, retired, grand in thought and action, with a live brain that for sixty-five years was to know no repose from the eternal question Why ? —that was the woman a pitiful, stupidly ignorant public accused of being able to play only one kind of rôle.

In Italy, where even the biggest and best-known companies do nothing but repertoire, and where no play has ever been of sufficient success to run over three weeks consecutively, and where generally the bill changed every night, there is little chance for an actor or actress who is not versatile.

They must be able and willing to play one night a familiar part, and the following night a new one, and then only is there hope of success.

Until 1883 Eleonora Duse toured with a moderate amount of success the big cities as well as the provincial towns in her own country, always much criticised for super-modern methods.

If at that time her fame and reputation were not growing as they should have, her mind was. In every city and town that she visited she studied the museums, art galleries, libraries, went to concerts and even political conferences whenever time would permit. Nothing that could increase the culture of the woman was left undone.

In those days it was not an unusual thing to see

the slight active little woman, her young expressive face aglow with interest, enter almost timidly the noted art galleries of Venice, Florence, Rome, or Naples, a guide-book in her hand, which before starting out on the tour of inspection had been carefully read.

She had not inherited her father's talent or taste for painting, so it was merely her innate sense of the beautiful that led her to comprehend the conception, technique, and colouring of the works of the great masters.

A writer on the subject of self-culture asserts that all this research had over-intensified her character, as a culture that had begun too late was bound to do.

Is that possible? Can study or culture ever come so late in life as to damage in any way the intellect? When a woman has stopped growing physically, and her brain is still fresh, not yet having tried its strength, it would seem that then, if ever, it should be ready to absorb all impressions.

Until she was a full-grown woman, Eleonora Duse had had few advantages and very little book-learning. The suffering of youth had opened the hitherto closed cells of the brain, showing her wherein she was lacking; gave her the desire for superiority and the will to study. That will she retained intact until the last days of her life. . . . Yet it was the insatiable thirst for knowledge that was her lifelong torment.

The earliest letters which remain as a proof of the depth of her intelligence and culture are those written in 1883-4-5, which unfortunately cannot be reproduced here as they are the property of an Italian writer; but enough to say that all of them show a thorough knowledge and appreciation of her own language, and the ability to express herself in writing as well as in speaking. At the end of one of the above-mentioned letters she wrote :

“ Regarding myself—when I have arrived in the full sense of the word, and youth has passed, and to the successes hoped for, and obtained, I shall be able to put the word ‘ fine,’ I will willingly close my career, and take refuge in silence. And with the conviction of truth say that in Art—the thought and expression—I have put my entire soul.”

Her absolute lack of vanity and conceit was well demonstrated by her unwillingness to autograph a photograph. When obliged to sign a picture she invariably wrote the name of the character she was representing. In 1884 she sent the following letter to a friend, accompanied by her photograph :

“ I sign this by the name which is not my own in private life—that, as you know, I think very little of. The one I have written on the picture is that of a beloved woman, in a beloved part. Do you remember it? Lydia di Morance, in ‘ The Wedding Visit.’ A month ago to-day I played it in Milan. Time flies ! Now that I have read what Dumas tells of the poor Desclée in that part ” (*New Review*), “ I feel unutterably sad, and even discouraged ! Certainly I do not compare with the beloved and much lamented woman and actress, but I, a mere stupid-looking little woman, whose life is composed entirely of work, in that work I have perhaps cried with Lydia . . . speaking through her lips. . . . Ah me ! Art is never satisfying ! ”

In 1885 she went with the Cesare Rossi Company for a long engagement in South America. An engagement which proved in more than one way to be a turning point in her life. . . . Flavio Andò, the handsomest actor on the Italian stage, was the leading man in the company. Though he had known Eleonora from the time she joined the Rossi Company until some

months before the departure for South America he had never thought seriously of her, generally having other and bigger fish to fry. But playing continually the stage lover, or husband, holding her evening after evening in his arms, feeling her heart beat close to his, awakened a normal desire in him to have her for himself, away from the wide-eyed public, far from the deafening applause.

And she? She had already been married over four years to a man whom she had never loved with any degree of passion; therefore it was not a question of love being dead, but merely that she was tired of him and his constant propaganda—his political questions, that had no place in Art. He was the father of her little daughter, and a *buon diavolo*, nothing more.

She had always admired Andò as a wonderful specimen of manhood in its perfection: he was cultured, naturally refined, elegant, on and off the stage. Women everywhere ran after him, not a day passed that he did not receive innumerable billet-doux. And Eleonora Duse fell in love with the love that she had acted with him, enhanced by his physical beauty.

During the long sea voyage to South America, Checchi, who for a long time had suspected that something more than a mere friendship existed between his wife and Flavio Andò, began watching and spying on them, and finally one day, not being able to find her in their state-room, or any of the salons, or on deck, he went to Andò's cabin.

When the two were confronted neither of them tried in any way to deny the truth.

The other members of the company knew of the relationship existing between the leading woman and the leading man, but, fearing there might be a duel, had done all possible to keep the affair from Checchi's notice.

However, there was no duel, for before they landed an arrangement was made between the husband and wife. Just what that was no one ever knew further than his statement that he had no intention of being made a fool of, and that since she preferred Andò to him she was free to do as she pleased, for he would not live with a woman who was unfaithful to him, even though she was the mother of his child.

To which it is said that she replied that she loved Andò, and had never loved him, and she considered his leaving her as good riddance to bad rubbish, for she didn't need him, nor his money, either for herself or their child.

Andò, an inimitable actor, remained her lover for a reasonably long period, and her leading man for many years.

In speaking of him only a short time before her death Eleonora Duse said :

“ I was young, and all the world knows how beauty attracts youth. I was even then a seeker after knowledge, but I was also a woman who loved love. He was a folly of youth ! *Il était beau, mais il était bete !* ”

Despite the family troubles which unnerved her for a time, it was in South America that Eleonora Duse began the conquest of world fame that was to accompany her to her grave.

Checchi, owing to his contract, was obliged to remain with the Cesare Rossi Company until the tour in South America was finished ; but when the company embarked for Italy he remained in Buenos Ayres.

The theatrical business had brought him only disillusion, so he decided to retire from the stage. He eventually went into the Consular Service, and was Italian Consul in Argentine until his death in 1920.

At that time the Government offered Eleonora Duse a pension of three hundred and thirteen pesetos a year, the amount that is always allowed a consul's widow. She refused the offer, for in order to have a pension from South America she would have had to live six months in Argentine.

At Buenos Ayres every performance was more or less an ovation for the Duse. She was appreciated as never before, but even the great esteem that was shown for her work did not serve in any way to make her less conscious of her defects.

During the illness of Diotti, a member of the company, she was forced to play in "Fedora." For five days she had helped to take care of the sick man, and going on that evening without him, hearing his part played by another, filled her very soul with pity and anger.

"It fills me with horror," she said bitterly, "to think how easily the place that we have worked so hard for can be filled by another. . . . We are vastly important to ourselves, and of little consequence to the world—enough that the drama goes on smoothly."

The first evening that she played without Diotti she felt weak and small, and it seemed to her as though her voice could not be heard beyond the stalls. . . . There was continual whispering in the boxes, and a sense of dissatisfaction all over the house. Her head, like her voice, refused to remain in its place. . . . The spectacle over, she changed in a fury, and still more in a fury went home. Closed in her room a profound sadness filled her being . . . emptiness enveloped her.

The following day the papers were vague, mentioning that, perhaps owing to the difficulty of the language, she had not been heard distinctly. . . . The attempt to excuse her weakness annoyed her more than frank condemnation would have done.

The next performance was "Denise." The theatre,

apart from the critics, was practically empty. The simple "Denise" went better. The audience at least listened during the first and second acts, and in the third their tears mingled with hers.

Coltin was substituted for Diotti in the part of Fernand; and as she played opposite the actor, new to her in that part, she thought continually of the sick man—thought until her thoughts became a silent prayer of love and sacrifice.

"Madonna," she whispered during an interval, "grant me this one grace: save the poor man! Help us! Oh, do not desert us in our hour of need! Save him for his father and mother who are waiting at home for his return. . . . Take away my art, if need be, in exchange for his life—only save him!"

Two days later Diotti passed away, and the bereaved company continued without him. From the suffering that she had known near the dying man, once more Eleonora Duse, out of the pain for another, found her supremacy.

"Fernanda" was the first play given after Diotti's funeral. Never before had she felt the strength of her will, nor realised that she could so intensely force herself on. With heart and soul she played to an intelligent climax and the greatest ovation that she had ever received.

When the performance was over, all emotion finally calmed, she went alone to her hotel. . . . Sadly, solemnly, she thought in retrospect over the events of the past weeks.

"After all," she said aloud to the silence of the night, "life is not vulgar, as I thought—it is merely grave."

That was a conviction that never left her. . . . She had perfect comprehension of others, marvellous bursts of uncontrollable mirth, an unfailing sense of humour; with contradictory moods of incredulity,

depression and bitter torment ; but over and above all humours, the individual responsibility, the gravity of life weighed.

After the return from South America many difficulties confronted the Duse, and not the least of these was the payment of her husband's debts, which with a nobility worthy of her she had assumed when she left him.

A turning-point more dangerous than previous success had made her believe possible, a period of discontent without visible reason, was before her, and growing continually. The problem of getting along materially, and the insistent question of paying for dead horses, kept her from going ahead as she should have.

She had been away from Italy too long, for the fickle public in a sense had forgotten her greatness, and had to be conquered again. With Flavio Andò as leading man she played continually with sufficient success to assure herself that she was wanted in her own country, but not needed.

Something was wrong inside—she herself was not in order, for the ascension, which for a time had been rapid, was becoming slower and slower. As an actress she seemed to be waiting outside a closed door ; the deepest mysteries of Art were those yet untried, and they were behind the door that she was patiently waiting to have opened for her.

To the best of her ability she began preparing herself to enter into the realm where the treasures that she sought were concealed. Her salvation as an actress was within herself, within the woman. . . . From then on she applied herself with assiduous application to what she considered the rawness of her culture. . . . In due time she became a magnificent example of auto-didactic.



FLAVIO ANDÒ.
The Duse's first leading man.

During this period of doubly active research for hidden treasures she studied untiringly the people about her, the most profound books obtainable, Church art—sedulously enriching her knowledge day by day.

Of a prodigious sensibility, rich in natural talent, she gradually assimilated a vast patrimony of culture, which changed, ennobled, and sweetened the physiognomy. The bright tint of her skin paled delicately ; on the noble brow a new light appeared, the beautiful rebellious hair fell back from the forehead like wings ready to open, and over the left temple a white mesh appeared soft against the intense black.

On the stage she was still the actress who could give life to the most inconsistent figures : where there was nothing, she created ; the banal phrases spoken by others she made unforgettable.

Several years passed, and she was still waiting to find her *chemin de Damas*. The messenger whom Fate was to send never seemed grand enough to decrease or increase the early glory. The Duse denied to the point of absurdity, even with ingratitude, the precocious past. She felt the need of being, wanted to be, renovated—renewed ; but was unfortunately without a guide in her research, without help to go beyond the closed door.

The love that was waning was of no aid, and even the little daughter, whom she loved devotedly, she kept most of the time at a distance from her, for fear the stage might, even at that early age, call her.

Maternal love, as well as love of woman for man, was insufficient to calm the restless spirit.

In her aloofness she immersed herself completely in literature, detrimental to her at that particular period. Badly digested philosophy saturated the active mind, causing it to become a fountain of useless dreams.

The public had begun to show less desire for her ; there was something monotonous in her acting ; the critics did not try to hide the fact that they found her wandering from the immutable law of scenic truth. The net equivocally tightened. With the disdain for which she was well known, a disdain that was never used except to cover a wound too deep to show, she isolated herself in an impregnable silence which was a rebuff to the general sympathy of the theatre-going public. They in turn began to look upon her as presumptuous, even ungrateful. . . . Instead, she was merely fearful.

And it was just at that time that she met the well-known dramatist, Giuseppe Giacosa, who became almost at once her friend and was in time to prevent the complete failure of her career. By his sane, intelligent advice she was saved from abandoning the stage. Had they not become friends Eleonora Duse would not have gone down in history as the greatest actress of the age.

But in some other walk of life would she not have been great ?

As Enif Robert, for many years a member of the Duse Company, has said truthfully : " Eleonora Duse the woman was far grander than Eleonora Duse the actress—grand as the actress was. . . . Fate had destined her to be famous in whatever she did. . . . What a queen she would have made—perhaps the greatest in all history ! "

Instead she was to keep on acting and acting, for with a man's clear insight, and also vast experience of the caprices of the public, Giacosa came to her aid. By his intelligent interest and friendly advice she emerged from the difficulties surrounding her, stronger, greater, and fearless.

From the sealing of her friendship with Giacosa dates the beginning of the absolute grandness of the

actress Eleonora Duse. The superior intellect was what she had needed and waited patiently for. This friendship lasted with only one interruption until Giacosa's death, and was continued, one might say, with his son.

There had been a misunderstanding between Eleonora Duse and Giacosa which caused a break in the long friendship that had been gratifying on both sides. Knowing the benefit they were to each other, and that the rupture had already lasted too long, many mutual friends sought to bring about a reconciliation. Offended for a reason that she alone knew, she turned deaf ears to all appeals, until at length Giacosa's brother, at the end of a long talk with the Duse, mentioned casually :

“ You know I have a brother called Giuseppe——”

“ Have you, indeed ? ” the Duse interrupted him laughingly. And in that simple way, after innumerable futile attempts, peace was made between the two famous friends.

From the very simple, scantily-clad little girl, in the matter of dress she had become the woman of personal intuition. Even at the beginning of her success she showed a rare taste in the selection of her costumes. The originality of her head-dress in the first act of “ Claude's Wife ” attracted much attention, so much so that to-day it is remembered—yet it was nothing more than a dull red silk scarf tied in a bizarre manner that gave a satanic appearance to the face. In the last act of the same play she was literally wrapped in serpent's scales. . . . In “ *Camelle* ” (*La Dame aux Camélias*) in each of the five acts she wore a different costume, always on the white tone : snow, silver, ivory, gold, and yellowish old-gold ; the colours of the daisy. . . . In the four acts of “ *La Porta Chiusa* ” the costumes were white ; and so on all

through her repertoire : the colour was in harmony with the character.

Off the stage, in private life, she dressed with simple elegance, and, when her first youth had passed, either in black or white. She felt the cold terribly, and generally until the hot weather wore a fur coat.

Jewellery was not among her passions, though at one time she possessed some very beautiful stones—many of them presents from crowned heads—which she seldom wore, except to please her friends. She did not despise jewels, but, as she often said, she considered them an unnecessary responsibility—for youth needs no adornment, and old age is ridiculous enough without calling attention to it by the useless wearing of jewels.

A very handsome string of pearls, a gift from the Spanish Court, was the one ornament that she cared for, and that is no doubt explained by the fact that she wore them during the reading of "*Francesca di Rimini*," the last play d'Annunzio wrote for her. The sale of the pearls, which financial losses necessitated during the War, was a real grief to her.

One day Mme. Robert, in a new frock, and wearing a modest pendant, a present from her husband, went to call on the Duse.

"Robertina"—La Signora, as she was called by the members of her company, spoke with more than usual sweetness—"Robertina (her pet name for Enif Robert), you look very nice to-day."

Mme. Robert, then a young bride, blushed proudly.

"Your frock is very pretty," the Duse continued ; "your hat is becoming ; but you must not wear that"—she touched the new pendant. "One should never wear jewellery on the street, or when travelling. For your pleasure may arouse envy in those who have no jewellery. . . . Very rich clothes and precious stones are for the privacy of one's home, or private social

gatherings. . . . Don't ever forget that, little woman." Enif Robert never has.

A short time before leaving for South America—to be exact, January 3rd, 1885—Count Primoli read "Denise," then Alexandre Dumas' latest play, to Eleonora Duse.

At the beginning of the reading she remained uncertain, and until the middle of the third act did not know whether to laugh or cry over the exquisite rôle, the beauty of which seemed to escape her.

With the confession, the part which decides the success of the play, she suddenly changed colour; tears ran down her cheeks. At the details of the child's death she got up impulsively, twisting her handkerchief nervously, and almost in shame over her emotion took refuge behind a screen, where she remained hidden until the reading was over.

In a flash of the intuition that she has ever been noted for, she had understood the pure type of Denise who passes through the play chaste, proud, sweet, silent. Under the implacable mask the gnawing secret which finally gets away from her is foreseen. Denise during the play neither laughs nor cries; sometimes she sings in so sad a strain that, though her eyes remain dry, tears come to those who watch her. . . . This grand sweet vision must be like Vatican bashfulness, so that in a moment the mask can be thrown aside and the hidden secret revealed, the heart bared to the man she loves. . . . After the confession she re-enters within herself forever, and under the veil of wifely duty—happy or resigned, it matters little which—she returns to the shadows, and the silence. . . .

Perhaps "Denise" was the first play to so beautifully present good sense in the form of a young woman of penetrating charm . . . in which love, suffering,

self-abandon, even death serve to ripen the charm. . . . The heart from which hope had faded, about to rebloom under a new, more charitable love, a heart which dares not acknowledge the right to love, so closes within itself forever.

The figure of Denise was the personification of Eleonora Duse. With natural enthusiasm she longed to create the part immediately, without even taking time to study it. She felt instinctively that she knew Denise, had already lived in her.

The situation of a woman at the moment when she believes all her trials are over, and only happiness awaits her, and instead is confronted by death, had been the Duse's dream of a proper *dénouement*. With the reading of Denise she found the realisation of her dream. . . . The knowledge that in a few days she could have the manuscript of the play was the greatest satisfaction to her pride that she had ever known.

Confident of a new glory, she lived for five days with the vision of the play continually before her.

She had been ill for some time and only kept up by her indomitable courage. On January 8th a sudden break came and the doctor's verdict gave no further hope of saving her. She bid farewell to those who were near, and though unresigned to death, closed her eyes. By pure force of will she again opened them, afraid that if they closed it would be for the last time. . . .

She did not want to die then, she wanted to live—to be Denise.

As from a distance she heard the doctor's discouraged whisper; with a supreme effort she raised herself to a sitting posture, with a superb gesture pointed to the door, then fell back wearily, completely overcome by the strength of her emotion. . . . Never had she held to life as she did that day . . . and she felt that life slipping, slipping from her.

The crisis past, Count Primoli wrote to Alexandre Dumas :

“ If she ever gets up again I’m afraid they will force her to play—to play until she falls in her tracks. . . . In a few days she will be on the ‘ boards ’ once more, if she is not between four boards, which is still possible. . . . She has asked me to give her Denise’s confession to keep her company as soon as she can hold her eyes open. . . . I wish she would decide to go to the country for a week, in order to regain her strength and to study the new part . . . Also in the clear balmy air to find again her exquisite voice.”

And they forced her to play—to play until almost forty years later she did drop in her tracks.

The first qualification for an actress is a pleasant voice, a voice with light and shade, a voice that lives in one’s memory long after the lines of the play are forgotten. . . . Such was Eleonora Duse’s. Once heard, the indefinable something that made it different from any other voice in the world remained with the persistency of tender souvenirs in the reserved cells of the heart. It was not bronze, silver or gold : it was merely human, the bell of the soul, endlessly musical, and shadowed with infinite expression.

In her youth the voice was thin, with little resource ; short for the outcry, the low notes hard, not well placed, and slightly nasal, as it is said the great Desclée’s was also.

As soon as she became conscious of vocal defects the Duse began a discipline that in a remarkably short time rendered her voice smooth, sweet and penetrating ; light as a bird’s singing ; note after note of beauty coloured by hope, doubt, fear, love, exultation ; with the ability to plunge suddenly into deeper tones that

never failed to carry suffering upon their dark, slow wings.

Count Primoli still recalls the tone with which the Duse pronounced Cesarine's famous tirade in "Claude's Wife": "Are you sure that the children which we conceive in sin, and in mystery bring into the world, are truly our children?"

Eleonora Duse would never admit that a mother, no matter who she was, could deny motherhood; and in reading the above lines she even had trouble in making the words pass her lips where the kisses that she could never give to her dead baby were dried forever. So great was the interior force put into the reading that she generally produced a stuttering effect, like the far-off ringing of a death-knell.

One evening Prince Napoleon was in a stage-box at a certain moment when Cesarine had despaired of ever winning back her husband; infuriated, the Duse gave one piercing scream that ended on a low, dark, mysteriously sweet note. . . . A vision passed before the Prince's eyes; a vague memory perhaps stirred his heart, a name long forgotten came to his lips:

"Rachel!"

Angelo Conti, one of the greatest Italian philosophers, passing one evening in a gondola through a small canal that cuts into the Guidecca, in company with Sem Benelli, called the poet's attention to an old, seemingly abandoned house.

"At this very spot, many years ago, on an evening similar to this one, I truly heard for the first time the grandness of Eleonora Duse's art."

"She played here?" Sem Benelli asked, astonished. "A fragment of Shakespeare?"

"No, Eleonora merely spoke. She raised her voice in praise of the spectacle before her. Her thoughts and words were as marvellously beautiful as the surroundings. . . . And her voice, falling on the stillness of

the evening, was the most harmonious sound I have ever heard.

"The Duse is such a spontaneous artist, so well consecrated, that in no place could her art seem so beautiful as before the pureness of Nature. If those who admire her had heard the voice as I did, hearing it on the stage they would again find in her all the wonder of our surroundings, all the mystery of Venice."

Alfred Kerr tells how Mr. Arthur Collins, at one time manager of the Drury Lane Theatre, spoke of Eleonora Duse :

"She did a lot for me"—Mr. Collins is said to have blushed vividly. "I was a silly young ass in those days, and a bit too roughly sure of myself. . . . By the enchantment of her voice she brought me to my senses . . . made me better—a man."

By the enchantment of her voice—or was it the soul behind it that cast itself before, lighting the dark places, making others better for its being ?

In the next few years many thousands will come forward to proclaim the wonder of her nature, the purity of the soul that knew no rest. Thousands, nay, millions, no doubt there are, whose sufferings were lessened by her consoling words ; thousands the world over who so long as life lasts must ever keep the sacred memory of the gentle thrush-like voice. . . . And blessed indeed are those who have known the touch of the divinely beautiful hands, the hands so delicately feminine, restless, tender, healing.

During the long period of waiting and research the Duse Company was not even paying expenses, and, owing to the poor business, contracts with good theatres were difficult to get. Playing to empty houses had a depressing effect on the spirit of all the actors ; discontent was in the air. The Duse was distracted, absorbed in dreams—from the uselessness of which

Giacosa was eventually able to awaken her. . . . While in a state of intense feverish work a new element of inspiration came into her life, a spirit mentally so superior as to lift her completely out of the lethargic condition into which she had fallen to a state of exultation that knew no end.

Arrigo Boito, from the very beginning of his friendship with Eleonora Duse, constituted himself her intellectual and spiritual adviser. . . . She wanted to know everything, and like a miser became jealous of the treasures she was storing away in her mind.

That the field awaiting this cultivation was fertile is shown by a letter written in 1886 to an intimate friend, from Varazza, where she had gone with her little girl for a rest after an illness.

“ Here I am writing with one hand, and with the other giving toys to a lovely little girl whose mother I am only for certain hours—the balance of the day I do all in my power to be a child. . . . I have hidden myself away in a tiny, tiny house—a mere red shack with green shutters—fronting the grand, inexplicable sea. . . . Day comes—evening follows—and then again the day—after that evening. . . . It’s all a little wheel turning under the all-powerful regulating sun . . . the sun which never changes its place—and neither do I.

“ There are grasshoppers in plenty—a beautiful grape-vine peeping in at my window—lame dolls—horses without saddles or reins—healthy food—no pianos, no wordly music—a little, barefooted, white-bearded monk comes each day to beg—and that is all except peace for the soul, a heartfelt smile for you, my baby girl, and a sense of perfect well-being for the body that had begun to be moth-eaten at the roots.”

Boito as a musician was greater at the time that



ARRIGO BOITO.

they met than the Duse as an actress. He was a man with unlimited experience, rich in knowledge of the fine arts, cultured, and a gentleman born. He not only offered her of his superior intellectual gifts, but he aided and upheld her in every branch of research and study. The vast artistic temperaments of these two grand characters were united spontaneously in a rhythmic harmony that brought an immediate and everlasting benefit to the most malleable of feminine souls.

From the time of Flavio Andò, Eleonora Duse never found any interest in a man for other than his intelligence, and though after Boito another great love was to come—a love that brought the most intense suffering, above all to her pride—the greatness and appreciation of Boito was to remain the most vital memory of her life.

Never after the famous musician did Eleonora Duse find so perfect an equilibrium of active force, never again did she have the fortune to find a more precious inspiration ; and no other man was ever a more valid spiritual support, a firmer guide.

Her personality became purified under the influence of this friendship, a friendship which ripened into the most idealistic love.

The closed door opened before her ; from the threshold she gazed into the enchanted palace of her dreams, saw herself crystalline. The prince in the fairy tale had changed the waiting Cinderella into a veritable princess, giving her profundity of expression, faith in herself, consciousness of her true worth.

Many strong influential friends and other loves were to come into Eleonora Duse's life ; the world was to hear of her suffering caused by man's unfaithfulness, to malign her because she was great ; but only those who were near, or in her confidence, ever knew that the one real sincere love, the grand passion

of her life, was the musician of world-wide fame. Arrigo Boito was the man who showed her the clear, open road, who awakened the divinity of her soul, and taught her that the work she was doing was the fulfilment of the mission for which she was sent : the man whose true worth was not to be proclaimed until after his death ; whose " Nerone," given at the Scala in Milan during the month of May, 1924, was to be the greatest musical event in many years.

Arrigo Boito brought light to the personality of Eleonora Duse the woman, just as his great love and faith in her put her on the dramatic pedestal, where she remained for over thirty years.

When the glimmer had died down, and the love was practically burned out, they returned to the still fragrant friendship. Destiny sent them on different ways, far apart : to the conquest of new glories for her, and to renewed work for him—each taking on the journey a tender, vital memory locked away forever in the heart's most secret chamber.

Only a few years ago, while she was at the Hotel Cavour in Milan, the life, rich in experience and palpitating memories, came to a close. Eleonora Duse had been advised of Arrigo Boito's illness, yet the news of his death completely prostrated her.

Theirs had been a mystic love, untarnished by wordly ambitions or vulgar notoriety, and in the seclusion of an hotel apartment, alone, she mourned him. For three days and nights she neither ate nor slept, apparently unconscious of those who served her ; she moved mutely about the silent room ; and the nights were passed in a big armchair before the wide-open window, where she sat staring fixedly towards the impenetrable sky—her soul evidently lost to all earthly surroundings, seeking peace in the mystic communion.

It seems strange that a woman continually in the

public eye had been able to hide her real sentiments from the world ; but was it not due perhaps to the exquisite reticence of the man whose desire was to be the power behind the throne rather than the blatant herald of her mundane greatness ? For the man who writes of his love-affairs, even though they be with famous women, is trespassing on the privacy that is not his own, or even that of the world.

Eleonora Duse was jealous of her private life, which she felt belonged to her ; and the man who protected her woman's name was the man she remembered until the end.

In Jerome K. Jerome's wonderfully symbolical book " The Passing of the Third Floor Back," immortalised by the magnificent English actor, Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, the character of the Third Floor Back was the Christ of to-day, who lives unobserved in our midst. . . . Eleonora Duse, who lived among the jealous, gossiping, evil-minded, immoral world of the theatre, was the white rose in the field of poppies . . . a woman so thoroughly human as to be super-human, a woman of intense passions, divinely simple—a perfect example of the Golden Rule. And it was that divine trait in her character that accounts for her interest in young, or unknown, playwrights, many of whom owe their position, their success, to her.

Never able to forget her own early struggles, she was quick to offer the help that she herself had been denied. No manuscript sent to her was ever returned unread, and many times she collaborated practically in the re-writing of a play that to her seemed worthy of presentation.

In 1890, Marco Praga, then slightly known, wrote " La Moglie Ideale " (" The Ideal Wife "), with the secret ambition of having the Duse play it.

She was doing a short season in Turin. Praga

full of hope, left Milan with the cherished manuscript. Through the intervention of her leading man and owing to her predilection for young writers, she consented to Praga's reading the play to her.

In the august presence of "La Divina," the young author was nervous and read the three acts through scarcely taking the necessary breathing-space.

"I like the play"—Eleonora Duse smiled kindly, amused by the man's nervousness, and interested in the play—"but I must hear it once more before being able to give you a valuable opinion. Come to me again in a couple of days, and I will tell you precisely what I think of your work."

The first reading had evidently been sufficiently satisfactory. The scrupulous attention with which the Duse had followed the play, the interest shown in her expressive face, and the demand for a second reading convinced Praga that his day as a playwright was about to dawn.

Two days later, slightly calmer, he awaited the sentence to be pronounced on "La Moglie Ideale."

After praising the young writer, who, according to American critics would never have been anything if it had not been for her, the Duse said impulsively :

"You must rewrite the third act. I *feel* the play with a third act so—so—and so——" And in minute detail, scene by scene, she reconstructed the act as her sensibility told her it should be.

As she talked Marco Praga's eyes brightened with satisfaction, joy and assurance. The master hand was there to guide him, and he could not fail. When she had finished talking he bounded to his feet.

"Yes, yes ! you're right, signora ! Of course you know more about it than I do, and naturally have the correct idea ! I'll change it exactly as you suggest ! How—how can I ever thank you !"

Marco Praga never arrived at any greatness, but

Eleonora Duse's friendship for him was certainly the means of making him known as a playwright. He is a charming man, and was a loyal friend, and worthy of the high honour which has come to him through her—but more of that later.

It was the dinner hour when Praga reached his hotel. Without even thinking of food he hurried directly to his room, and in a frenzy began to write. . . . Day was creeping in at the tightly-closed windows when the third act of "*La Moglie Ideale*" was finished.

The Duse gave an unusual amount of affection to the interpretation of that play, which turned out to be a most significant success for her, as well as the Italian theatre of that time.

Marco Praga during the rehearsals of "*La Moglie Ideale*" became an intimate friend of the Duse; perhaps preferring the constancy of friendship to the disillusion of love, he remained her simple friend until the last. Knowing her as he did, he tells many fascinating anecdotes of the private Eleonora.

Once at Trieste he found her alone in the hotel, at her dinner hour. She was sitting on the floor of her salon, her back against the wall. A tea-tray was on her knees, and great tears were dropping on to her plate.

"What in the world is the matter?" Praga asked anxiously. "Has something gone terribly wrong?" He pictured all kinds of horrors, and was preparing himself to cry with her.

"No, nothing's the matter," she smiled radiantly through the rain. "I just remembered about *Odette*!"

"What?"

"I'm doing *Odette* this evening, and you know that if I don't unburden myself a bit, during the fourth act I shall cry too much—and I'm afraid the audience might make fun of me. . . . *Odette* is a professional weeper, but—I must not ride a good horse to death!"

The fourth act has always bothered me ! For if I haven't the time to cry beforehand I can't play it ! ”

In 1890 she was gay, full of the joy of living ; the past, to all outward appearances, forgotten. The future yet untried was only waiting to augment her glory—not from a worldly point of view, for the fame and ovations were never her real life, they were merely the means to the end. Glory brought her money ; money enabled her to increase the importance of her productions, and the value of her work—work in turn permitted her to put aside enough for her to retire to the quiet that in her heart she longed for.

The oldest flower-vendors at the foot of the Spanish Stairs, Piazza di Spagna, Rome, recall the “grand little lady,” always dressed in white, who often came as early as eight o'clock in the morning, while they were still unpacking their wares, to buy violets. . . . How gaily she laughed over their respectful pleasantries, her eyes flashing, the beautiful white teeth sparkling in the bright morning sun.

Like a schoolgirl she would run up the wide stone steps ; at the top pause to gaze over the only half-awakened city ; then dash down again, a faithful friend in her wake, or more often alone. . . . In the Piazza she would also stop to gossip again, sometimes with an old cabby, or a couple of ragged children, it mattered not who—the kind word and smile were for those who needed them, a tiny ray of her own privileged sunshine for all who lived in darkness. . . . Her pain and suffering, like the poor, she had with her always ; but that was for the silence and the solitude. Her joy was for the world. . . .

And blessed indeed are those who heard the Duse laugh. It was a soft trill in which there was the freshness of the Spring that she had never known. It gave one the desire to be gay ; irresistibly communicated a sense of flowers and perfume to the air.

But frequently in between the laughter there was the faint delicate echo of a sob, for, though she would never say so, she was passing through a period of material disillusion ; adding torment to torment. . . . At that time the dream of the theatre at Albano was born. The dream that, despite the influential persons who became interested in it, was unfortunately never to become a reality.

Continually endeavouring to enrich her already vast repertoire, vociferously acclaimed in every city, adding triumph to triumph, glory upon glory, Eleonora Duse finally arrived at the pinnacle of her success. The world was ready to proclaim her greatness—the world wanted her. . . . Vienna, Berlin, Moscow, Petrograd, London and New York—even Paris called.

Big managers wrote offering her engagements everywhere ; and Schurmann, the French manager who had seen her when he was in Italy with the Bernhardt, came again to offer a tour of the great European capitals. . . . The little Italian with only a bit of talent, as she had spoken of herself, had become the great tragedienne, and was being implored to listen to the plea of a foreign manager ; to heed the voices of the world outside the confines of her own beautiful, beloved country ; the voices that were calling, and calling for her. . . .

PART II

The Triumph at Vienna, 1892—Other European Triumphs—Berlin—London—New York—Meeting with d'Annunzio—The Woman in Her Rare Moments of Ease—The d'Annunzio Propaganda—Other Successes Abroad—Paris—Life and Work Until the Closing at Vienna, February, 1909.

“SHE is always different, like a cloud that from second to second seems to change before your very eyes without your seeing the change. Every movement of her body destroys a harmony, and creates another more beautiful. You beg her to sit down, to remain motionless, and over and above the immobility a torrent of obscure force passes as thoughts pass from the eyes. . . . Do you understand? The expression is the life of the eyes, this indefinable something more potent than any word or sound; infinitely profound, yet instantaneous as a flash of lightning, even more rapid than lightning—innumerable, all-powerful: summed up—the expression. Now imagine this expression diffused through her body. Do you understand? A movement of the eyelids—the face is transfigured and expresses immense joy and pain to you. The eyelashes of the beloved being are lowered, shadows surround you as a river surrounds an island; the eyelashes are raised, the heat of summer burns the world. A new movement of the eyelids, your soul dissolves into a drop: again you believe yourself King of the Universe. . . . Imagine her body enveloped

in this mystery ! Imagine every part of her, from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet, an apparition of fulmineous life. . . . Could you sculpture the expression ! . . . The ancients made their statues sightless. . . . Now imagine, all of her body is like the expression. . . .

“ GABRIELE D’ANNUNZIO.”

In 1892, the year of the International Theatre and Art Exhibition at Vienna, on an improvised stage of exceptional elegance, dramatic and lyric companies from every country and in every language alternated. . . . The Comédie Française, The Hungarian National Theatre, The Praga Opera Czeca, The Compagnia Goldoniana, under the management of Giacinto Gallina ; and last, but not least, an admirable company of the Stagione d’Opera Italiana, presented by Sozogno, who offered to the vastly interested public the best musical works of the then Young Italy. Italy had the honour of figuring most brilliantly at the memorable Exhibition ; but despite the triumphs of Mascagni and Benini, who carried away the “ Palm ” for Italy, despite the fact that the opera was well attended, the gigantic expenses of the season exceeded the receipts, and the Exhibition closed with a deficit.

Among the many who ardently desired to take part in the International events, there was an Italian actress, already celebrated in her own country, in Russia, Spain, and South America, but unknown in Germany, and, unfortunately, unheard of to the Exhibition committee, who, in that case, were unequal to the grave responsibility imposed upon them.

Eleonora Duse gently knocked on the door, and was immediately refused admittance. Conscious of her personal worth and strength, she retained her courage and insisted upon entering.

On February 20th, a short time before the opening

of the Exhibition, the Duse, well supported by Flavio Andò, and other excellent actors, opened at the Carltheatre in the "Signora dalle Camélie" ("Camille").

The few people who were fortunate enough to be at that performance remembered the evening ever after. . . . The theatre was scarcely half filled, for the innumerable idolators that Eleonora Duse eventually had in Vienna at that time did not even know her name.

It seems impossible to believe that an actress already famous in more than one country could be unheard of in one of the greatest centres of European culture, in a city where theatrical history was never *parva pars*. Nor did the Duse—who was always against unnecessary publicity, other than the echo that emanated from her art—think of having the public prepared for her coming.

She was frankly discouraged when she saw the empty house, but more than ever determined to conquer the city that she had come to—more to gratify her manager than for her own pleasure.

After the first act there was a moderate amount of applause. The new way of hearing lines read, the woman who moved as no other actress until then had ever moved on any stage, left the audience coldly stupefied.

During the second act, after the scene of the reconciliation with Armand, which the Duse never failed to interpret with sublime affection, stupefaction changed to admiration, and the applause became warmly unanimous. From the third act until the end of the drama, after the big scenes, especially those with Duval—the meeting with Armand at the ball, and Marguerite's death—the enthusiasm of the audience increased, until at the final curtain it was nothing short of an ovation.

The harmony of her talent, it has been said, lay

perhaps in the contrasts. . . . One heard the melody and the accompaniment singing in her at the same time. She had the art of saying one thing, and letting the public understand that she was thinking another. . . . She excelled from the beginning until the end in representing the dual personality, in marvellously complicated shades.

One account of her "Camille" shows the difference between her rendering of Marguerite Gautier, and that of the other great actresses, and explains the success of February 20th, 1892, before a stolid, German-speaking audience, to whom the musical Italian language must indeed have sounded strangely unreal.

"The Duse plays the drama with her temperament. The only reproach that some might make is that her Marguerite is not a Parisian courtesan, but merely a simple woman in love. What she loses in local value she gains a hundredfold in universal human value. . . . Marguerite is in reality at the beginning of the drama a light, careless woman who does not love; life means nothing to her—she burns the candle at both ends, speaks rapidly, without giving thought to her words. . . . But the moment that Armand's voice has touched her heart, all is changed: she speaks slowly, a new existence has opened for her—she lives, and longs to know the joy of loving, and of being loved. . . . And when at length she gives the flower to Armand, in the very delicacy of the offering Marguerite gives him her heart as well.

"In the second act, when she reads under the lamp the letter from Armand, with the old Count looking on, her face does not express the slightest emotion, but an almost imperceptible trembling of the knee reveals the agony that she is passing through, the devastated state of her soul.

"When she leaves Armand Duval, whom she never expects to see again, instead of the conventional kiss

on the brow (which was what the other actresses had given before her) she kissed him on the lips, leaving her great love there, stronger than all that must come between them. . . . Sure that the regret of her caresses is still fresh—and will remain so—she goes to find Count de Varville again.

“The fifth act, in which Armand returns, is a poem of truth. No one could ever fully appreciate the wonder of her acting unless they had seen her when she takes the precious letter from under the pillow where, like a sick person who passes her life in bed, she keeps it; half lying, her head on the pillow, she begins reading aloud; her hand from time to time drops from weakness; then, like a school-girl, she recites the letter that, having read and re-read, she knows by heart.

“Without adding a word to the original text, or in any way changing the author’s idea, she gains a telling effect, by the Shakespearian vision so subtly introduced. . . . When she plans the trip with Armand, she stops abruptly: the horrible vision of death suddenly comes between them; its reflection is in her frightened expression and terrified attitude. . . . She sees the Grim Monster come out from behind the bed-curtains, she sees him slipping stealthily close to the wall—she follows him with horrified eyes, accompanies him to the door, and not until she believes that he has passed the threshold does she resume their interrupted project. . . . She has begun to have hope again, when without warning she falls back on the pillows. . . . Flat on her back, she seems to be trying once more to grasp the happiness within her reach, to be holding on to life—with her arm about her newly-made husband’s neck. Then by a simple gesture, a slight movement of the frail, beautiful hand falling on the coverlet, does one know that death has truly come.”



In "The Ideal Wife."



At Vienna, 1892.

For the second performance at Vienna, on the evening of February 23rd, the house was entirely sold out. From the magnanimous suffering of Marguerite Gautier to the feline bursts of Fedora she passed with the perfection that established her forever among the elite Viennese theatre-goers; and the death scene, which she rendered in an entirely original manner, brought the vast audience, as one person, to its feet in a prolonged "Bravo!"

A critic wrote:

"When she begins to feel the effect of the poison she accelerates her speech, like a person who has much to say and only a short time to say it; then, somewhat like a bull in the ring who drops from the death-blow, she falls on her knees before her lover, the outstretched arms already stiff, as though in dying she were pleading for pardon."

For the third evening, Ibsen's "The Doll's House," the theatre, even to the standing room, was sold out several hours before the performance. . . . In those long-ago days it is said that Eleonora Duse had a special repugnance for Ibsen, and that she considered him as a "vain agitator of shadows," and that she gave "The Doll's House" very much against her will in order to satisfy her insistent annoying counsellors. . . .

The morning after the first performance of "The Doll's House" in Milan, in 1890, despite her personal success, as well as that of the play, she is supposed to have been very indignant over the fact that, owing to the sudden illness of Flavio Andò, her leading man, an understudy would have to go on that evening—making a rehearsal necessary of "quell'orribile mattone norvegese" (that horrible mad Norwegian).

To me it seems incredible that the grand Duse, who appreciated so fully the greatness of Ibsen, could ever, even at thirty, have spoken disparagingly of an author whose work she revered at fifty, not as a

momentary caprice, as so often happened with her, but much as one reverences something holy.

Her rebellious Nora, so diverse from the other two characters, added another laurel to the generous wreath that Vienna had crowned her with. . . . The fourth, and last of the engagement, was a repetition of "Camille."

The same year she played two other short seasons at Vienna, giving twenty-eight performances in all, with unheard-of receipts, considering that the greater part of the audience understood very little Italian.

During her second season in Vienna, May and June, 1892, she presented "Odette" for the first time in that city.

As Mme. Réjane, the superb lamented French actress (to many French people superior to the great Sarah), whose vital and modern talent is said to have been the nearest approach to that of the Duse, stated, in "Odette," when the Count comes to ask her consent to their daughter's marriage—the daughter who had been taken away when she was small—the Duse gave a bit of acting that had never been equalled on any stage. In reply to the Count's demand :

"A daughter? Have I a daughter? I——"—she said it with a dryness that was intended to hide the profound suffering. "Perhaps I have had a daughter, but she has been dead a long, long time!" . . . The icy words passed the maternal lips with difficulty, and then they closed, softly sending a kiss into space. . . . When the father consents to her seeing the daughter again on certain conditions, which he enumerates, she no longer listens, permitting him to give his reasons, accepting all; enough that she is to see her child. . . . She becomes transfigured, she radiates joy. "Bérengère!" she is going to find Bérengère once more—what does the rest matter! She murmurs

the beloved name twenty times in succession, smiling, eyes misty, tears in her voice. On the immobile face one follows Bérengère's entire existence—sees the baby at her breast, in her arms, on her lap ; she rocks her, jumps her up and down ; she laughs and cries with the child. Then suddenly : “ Bérengère ! ” a long-drawn broken sigh—the heartrending lament of the first act returns to one—the mother whose child has been rudely torn from her. Then, after a long pause, the void—“ Bérengère ! ” a vague whisper. Where is she, what is she now ? And then “ Bérengère ! ” pronounced with admiration as the apparition comes before her of a tall, beautiful young girl. Then the passionate cry—at last her turn has come : “ Bérengère ! ” And her husband has finished the listing of his conditions, without her having heard a word. In a blissful dream, with eyes half closed, she murmurs once more : “ Bérengère ! ”

In September, 1892, the world-famous Tomasso Salvini said, in speaking of the Duse's triumphs at Vienna :

“ The only thing that she has to lean on, and that in a way accounts for her unprecedented successes in a scant repertoire, is an exaggerated bundle of nerves ; for the Duse does not possess even the first principle of Art, but her marvellous character makes her express well what to others would necessitate a profound study.

“ Inexpressing the passions of a neurasthenic woman no actress can surpass her. It is a pity that her external qualities, especially the short range of voice, oblige her to keep to a limited repertoire.”

That was in 1892, when her foreign successes were still moderately limited, as was her repertoire. . . . Salvini was grand in his time, but he was of the old ranting school, as is his son, Gustavo, and to a slight

degree his grandson, Sandro, while she was, and remained so to the end, of a unique school—her own.

In order to get properly into a part she always prepared her rôle alone, in concentrated solitude, instead of constantly rehearsing on the stage with the other actors. She took the personage into her innermost being, giving herself a continual and intense work. She studied the character, sounded, and remade it a thousand times, assimilating it so well that afterwards she only had to return to her fancy to produce the complete living illusion. . . . And of every play she had at least ten copies, one of them always near at hand, where even in the midst of a conversation she could, if it came to her, jot down a new idea that later would help in the perfection of the interpretation. Thus all her manuscripts were marked and remarked with minute suggestions for the other parts, as well as her own.

She gave herself heart and soul to a creation, the remarkable intelligence the fuel that supplied the grand furnace from which the communicative flame spread over the entire theatre in vast magnetic waves. . . . A personage created by Eleonora Duse became the word made flesh. . . . And never, from Juliet to Bianca Querceta, in "La Porta Chiusa," her last performance, did she act a part : she lived it.

On more than one occasion a theatre with every seat sold remained dark, because she was not in the frame of mind to enter into the character of the play billed for that evening—and she refused to cheat the public by merely acting.

Certainly the stage has never known a more conscientious actress, nor a woman who so sacrificed herself or gave so freely of her divine gifts to the world ; for to me, as I think to all who knew her personally, in Eleonora Duse the actress—as well as the woman—there was an indefinable something that was not quite

of this world, that put her above all human beings, kept her apart, even when she herself might have desired human nearness. . . . The world stood ever in awe of her, afraid to offer love lest it be unworthy of her acceptance, and perhaps for that very reverence in which she was held she was often misunderstood—she who longed so intensely to understand, whose noble words and thoughts brightened many, many lives, tortured herself continually because of her inability to know all things and people.

To excel in the art of acting it is undoubtedly a help to descend, as the Duse did, from actors ; for in them there is the innate gift of creation, so that the author only has to supply the canvas for the actor's finishing-touch.

Eleonora Duse's most striking successes were in plays where the character was little more than indicated, and never subordinate to conventional acting. . . . The theme rarely bothered her : enough that the play had life ; the obstacles to be overcome merely served to redouble her powers, for she cancelled the defects instead of underlining them as another actress less talented might have done, and by the force of her will carried the play to fame.

One could never accuse her of having a system, for, as I mentioned before, she did not belong to any other than her own school. She was individual, she imitated no one, and it would have been difficult to imitate her. . . .

Almost all theatrical stars, especially in Italy, in order to receive the greatest applause, endeavour to make their entrance during an expectant pause ; on the contrary, the Duse did all that was possible to appear on the stage unobtrusively. She was always contented to be unobserved, or when recognised to hear, " Is that it ! " in a disappointed tone, for when she spoke, or made a simple gesture or slight movement,

the "it" became instantly someone, and in turn the someone everything, until nothing else on the stage or in the theatre existed.

The fascination which she exercised was due in part to the mobility of her physiognomy, which gave the spectator a varied and continually renewed spectacle.

Seeing her play the same part several times, it was interesting to note certain changes in the gestures, intonations ; exterior signs of a deeper modification : in other words, she did not limit herself to keeping the personality to the original conception—a mere shade of difference called forth by certain vibrations due to the mood, or reflection, of the soul's colour.

This, one might say, exaggerated temperament had a certain influence on the public, for one could never be sure, especially during the early years of her career, of seeing her on a good evening ; and that uncertainty for a time, particularly in Italy, was the cause of the poor business done by the Duse Company. . . . Later she had more control of her nerves, and less irregularity was noted ; but she never reached the insensibility that Diderot always wished the actress might have.

Even Madame Bartel, who seemed to have found a perfection where nervousness had no further influence, said : " The quality of emotion put into a rôle varies each day, for so much depends upon my mental and physical condition. Nothing is more intolerable than not to feel anything of the part. That happens to me rarely, but each time that it does I suffer a certain humiliation, almost a personal degradation."

" She is perfectly right ! " the Duse exclaimed when she received this confidence. " There are times when there is nothing more humiliating in life than the absolute knowledge of being inferior to one's reputation."

It is said also that the great Ellen Terry, despite her exquisite reserve, her chaste tenderness, gentle grace and impeccable taste, admitted more than once that she was not sufficiently mistress of herself to entirely dominate her acting. . . . Why then should one be surprised that Eleonora Duse, with her Southern temperament, suffered from the light and shade of moods?

A constant series of triumphs such as the Duse's in Vienna and Berlin—Eugene Zabel, one of the best German critics, wrote in 1893—perhaps no other actress had ever had. In the musical world it was not unusual for the public to acclaim a foreign celebrity, but for the drama it was unheard of. . . . So great was her success that the critics were at a loss to find words of sufficient praise, and, being unable to find defects in her acting, some of them went so far as to state modestly that they would like to study her school. . . .

Of all the foreign cities visited by the Duse Vienna was her preference, because, as she herself stated, without any advance notice she was immediately understood, and in Vienna she had her first great success outside her own country. . . . From 1892 to 1909 she played there sixteen times, giving in all 100 performances.

On the evening of December 4th, 1894, a few minutes before going on in "The Parent's House," Eleonora Duse wrote the following letter to Sudermann:

"Your Magda has worked for ten years. She who writes has worked for twenty.

"The difference is tremendous, if one calculates that it is the question of a woman, and of a woman who, contrary to Magda, counts the days that must pass before she can leave the theatre.

“ Magda had seventeen years at home. She who writes has never had a home. At fourteen they put her in long dresses, and they said : ‘ You must act.’

“ There is a slight difference between the two women !

“ However, Magda belongs to you, as she is your creation ; the other lives and goes her way like all the rest of the world. . . . But she wants simply to thank you, and to tell you of her gratitude, because it was thanks to your ‘ Parent’s House ’ that she gladly accepted the responsibility of this evening.”

And though she had gladly accepted the play, she was never convinced by it. The characters interested her, as the various situations and interpretations of great actors can interest an audience. . . . She gave an immediate personal touch to Magda—a part well known to the Germans, and frequently played by their great actress, Agnes Sarma. . . . Despite the unavoidable comparisons at the end of the performance the Duse was saluted as the greatest among the great.

Later in Bucharest the first performance met with little enthusiasm, and proportionately small receipts. The second evening the prices were reduced, uselessly.

A poor season was foreseen, owing to the many unfortunate events that were taking place at that time : the wheat crop had been poor, and as that was the principal source of income the theatre public remained at home, or those who did go out were not inclined to pay the prices necessary to see the Duse. The death of the manager of the National Theatre, where they were playing ; and the death of Prince Ghika, a high personality of the place ; the serious illness of the Prince, heir apparent, which kept the entire population uneasy, accounted for the disastrous business.

The Duse was seriously worried, not only for

financial reasons, but because of the continual sad events taking place. . . . The Continental Hotel where she was staying was opposite the theatre, and she could not even look out the window without seeing the mourning flag flying.

Everything in Bucharest that should have appeared gay, picturesque, interesting, even beautiful, seen in the time of patriarchal wealth, seemed painful and grotesque.

The men in their white linen trousers and tightly-pleated white skirts coming out from under Italian peasant jackets ; the old battered hats that suggested the Ghetto ; many-coloured festoons and strange signs ; merchandise of every known specie ; costumes of every country ; worthless old books ; embroidered pieces of rare value, together with old clothes, and furs of various qualities—all piled high on benches. . . . Street cries, invitations to look and buy. . . . Filth everywhere—and further on the disgusting market full of salt meat, thrown carelessly on greasy counters ; enormous blocks of salt, nauseating odours of unclean things and places. . . . Effeminate voices of eunuchs calling—boldly relating the stories of marriage one day and divorce the next ; how wealth was acquired by debts and worse ; where honour is as false as the luxury. And certain hotels where the most corrupt corruption penetrates . . . the real world of sin where redemption had not entered in—all tended to generate a speciality of tightening of the heart and repugnance that no sumptuousness, nor grand edifice such as the Law Courts, or the New Post Office, could efface ; nor the shadowed gardens of the gigantic hotels, nor the unending promenade, *Chaussée Chiseleff*, where the luxurious carriages drawn by marvellous stallions with floating manes, such as were not to be seen in any other European city—the stupefying flame like sunsets . . . nothing—nothing could take away

the bad taste of the corruption. . . . No other city in the world in 1894 presented so strong a contrast of savageness and refinement, wealth and poverty, slovenliness and elegance ; nor was any other place at once so Oriental and so French.

On the day of Prince Ghika's funeral the seriousness and uselessness of life-long struggles seemed to occupy the Duse's spirit, and she was heard continually to say : " The last performance, gentlemen, will be to-morrow." And yet that evening she was in perfect form as in the best of seasons, and in her most perfect vein interpreted " The Parent's House " to a more than contented audience, who after the third act were deliriously enthusiastic.

The two following evenings there was no performance, merely rehearsals at the Duse's hotel. The second evening she was deliciously gay, joking with all the actors, and seemed to have entirely recovered from the depression of the preceding days. . . . The first sense of aversion had passed, the taut nerves of all the Italian company were calmer, and with a certain serenity the unusualness of the " young capitol " was being appreciated.

But the performance of " Claude's Wife," the third of the Bucharest season, was not to be numbered among the fortunate ones, even though the evening before everything had looked so bright.

The Duse, for some unknown reason, was in an exhausted state and seemed to have lost all intellectual and sensual energy. She literally dragged herself on the stage, arms hanging limply, as though she had not the strength to raise them. The eyes which should have been animated during the acting remained lustreless, vague, inattentive. Of all the cast Cesarine was the least important. . . . In the second act, with the theatre filled with an attentive audience ready and willing to acclaim the great actress, the scene with the

maid, while she is serving the coffee, the scene which was generally so delicious, she cut entirely. The scene with Antonio, where the formidable actress should have been revealed, she merely spoke in a half-hearted manner. Even the big scene with Rebecca and Claude passed unnoticed, and so on until the end ; and the death, for which many had especially waited, the scene that never failed to bring frantic applause, and which she played as it is said no other actress ever had, fell flat. . . . After she had received the wound she would turn suddenly, raise her arms, let the stolen papers drop, and, with the body almost rigid, fall face downwards. That evening she went through the usual motions, but there was nothing to distinguish her from any ordinary actress. Nothing ! Nothing but a few little actions, good enough in their way, during the progress of the scene with her husband.

And the audience, after a faint desultory applause, in silence filed out of the theatre, wondering why they had spent their money to hear the mediocre Italian actress.

Yet some time later she had one of the greatest successes of her career in that same city, in the great d'Annunzio play, " *La Gioconda*."

What the trouble was that evening, what had unnerved her, and sapped her strength, not even the company knew, or understood, and least of all the leading man, Luigi Rasi. That something was materially wrong they all felt, for she had not even gone on the stage ten minutes before the curtain to see if all was in order, as was her unfailing custom.

The details of the scene had always been her constant study, and, from the time that she became a leading lady, she had never allowed the curtain to rise on the first night of any play in a new city without first assuring herself that the " props " were in perfect order.

For "Claude's Wife" at the Niccolini Theatre in Florence, she found one evening a plaster statuette of Venus on the safe at the back of the scene.

"No, no, no! that can't stay there!" she cried. "A Venus in Claude's house! Claude's!—a great mechanic, a rigid, rude, austere man! We must have something solid like he is! Bronze! Anything bronze!—a bronze bust! Socrates! No, there is no Socrates? You haven't one in the theatre? Nothing? In any case take this away. It's quite impossible. Take it away! That's it. Much better not to have anything, than a jarring note. Think of a dancing Venus in the house of a philosopher like Claude! What are you stage hands trying to do to me?"

Then when an imitation bronze bust was discovered :

"Bravo! That's better, much better! So! Everything must be in harmony. Everything! So!" she put it in place. "An historian, an orator, a warrior! So! All right!—now hurry with the curtain!"

Another evening, at the same theatre, they were giving "Hedda Gabler." Before the second act she threw a small book angrily on to the table and began measuring the stage with long, excited, nervous steps, and finally burst out :

"Not that stupid book! Not that. An album. A big album with photographic views! Doesn't one of the stage hands, or at least the manager, know that? Is this the first time 'Hedda' has been given?" Then, turning to the leading man :

"Signor Rasi, come here! You are intelligent" (it was not said to flatter him); "you will help me? Look what they have given me!" she picked up the offending book and flung it across the stage. "I must have a big album! Do you understand? For the scene at the table with George Loeborg. Have you perhaps something suitable? Do look among your belongings! Try to help me?"

Rasi reassured her, took a carriage, and hurried to his home. In ten minutes' time he was back with a big album containing views of Cairo.

"Oh, that's the very thing!" she exclaimed joyously when she saw it. "You see that you, dear Rasi, have saved me! Thank you, thank you! You realise, don't you, that this is what we need?" And when the act was over (which she had played, during the scene of simulation, with marvellous truth) she thanked Rasi again.

"Do you know that your album distracted me greatly? To see once more all those places that I had visited, and of which I have conserved the most delightful memories, made my thoughts fairly gallop, taking me far, far away."

In fact at this period her greatest preoccupation was for the scenic effects, which she considered the frame for her performances. She had almost a musical conception of the harmony with which every detail had to be brought together, from the intonation of the actor's voice to the intonation of the colours that offered the spectator the complete picture.

Her rare intelligence was most appreciated in the arrangements of the various statues and busts, as well as the light effects used in "*La Gioconda*," a very unusual achievement for that epoch, when stage settings were not the luxurious and artistic creations of to-day. . . . Compared with the richness of modern stage sets, those of the Duse Company were almost primitive, yet her attention to the minute detail remained remarkable.

At whatever season of the year, if the act called for roses, no matter how many, she had fresh roses—and never even one less than the number mentioned in the text—whereas any other actress would have used artificial flowers.

For example, in "La Porta Chiusa," there were always fifty white roses used in the first act.

In 1894 or 1895, the Duse was passing through London on her way to Italy, when Queen Victoria, hearing of her presence in the city, requested that she should give a performance at Windsor.

The perplexing question at once arose of what to present before Her Gracious Majesty, so as not to shock her British taste. A certain great lady suggested the fifth act of "Camille"; to the objections offered she replied :

"It is very simple to arrange: we will tell the Queen that it is the story of a young girl, Daisy, whose fiancé, Armand, is in India; he returns too late to marry her, and she dies in his arms."

The ingenious plot would perhaps have succeeded, despite Marguerite's hesitations, had the Queen not announced her desire to hear something cheerful.

In that case the *dénouement* of "Camille," even arranged specially for the Queen, did not fill the required conditions, and eventually the Duse went to Windsor to play "La Locandiera."

The spectacle was not given in the hall usually reserved for special performances, but in the white salon, which is the place used exclusively for great celebrities.

In the charming Goldian play the actress could only demonstrate her graceful qualities; but so well did she identify herself with the character, and, according to Italian traditions, address herself simply to the public, that the Queen, without perhaps quite appreciating the brio of the dialogue, enjoyed the naïve pantomime, and smiled from the beginning to the end.

The performance over, the Queen had the actress who had so charmed her presented.

The spectacle presented by the semi-circle of



THE DUSE AT 25.



AS "MIRANDALINA,"
In "La Locandiera."

princesses and great ladies in grand toilette surrounding the old Queen, who questioned the pretty "Locandiera," was like a continuation of the play.

The Duse still had on her smart little pink rose-bud costume, with the pointed bodice, and linen fichu fastened by a knot of black velvet ribbon. . . . Shy in the august presence, she played nervously with the corner of her apron, and, fearful of not being quite correct according to Court etiquette, she made one bow too many.

In order to put her at her ease, and to show her that she was among friends, the Queen said genially :

"I believe you know my daughter Victoria. In fact she has talked to me a lot about you." And the Duse, who was still in the mischievous spirit as well as the costume of *Mirandolina*, under her breath said to herself :

"Ah, little Eleonora ! I hope for once you're proud of yourself, with your swell connections ! Here you have the Empress of India who deigns to talk to you, and even reminds you that you know her daughter—another Empress !"

Then, to be still more agreeable, they recounted how highly the Emperor Frederick had spoken of her, and that the Emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm, wished to hear her. The week before he had been at Windsor, and they told her the joke that since the Royal visit had been the joy of the Court. There had been a grand family dinner, and, as on all such occasions, the Queen had arranged the seats at table according to the degrees of parentage, instead of public rank. . . . Her son-in-law, Prince Battenberg, was on her right, and the Emperor of Germany, figuring as the grandson, was relegated to the foot of the table. . . . Kaiser Wilhelm II., who was noted for his appropriate and ready wit, wanted to show himself a prince as well as a good grandson. During the dessert the first

toast was to the Queen of England, the second to the Empress of India, and the third to the innumerable other pompous titles of the powerful Sovereign. Like a child forgotten in his corner, the Kaiser raised his glass, and with a mischievous smile said meekly :

“ To Grandma ! ”

Whether the humour appealed to the Duse she never told, but at least she was more than satisfied with her reception at Court. “ *La Locandiera*,” after having been played for the Queen of England, received new honours in Italy, and owing to that remained in the Duse’s repertoire (I believe I am correct in this) until 1906, and was given the last time at the Manzoni Theatre, Milan.

While playing at the Drury Lane Theatre, London, in 1895, the most famous rivalry of the speaking stage took place. . . . Bernhardt, who was also playing in London, selected the part of Sudermann’s tragic heroine, Magda, for challenge, and the Duse promptly chose the same.

In one of the most wonderful criticisms ever written of the theatre Mr. George Bernard Shaw subjected them to a pitiless comparison. His conclusion was that the Bernhardt had been annihilated in the struggle by the enormous and overwhelming quietude of the Duse.

Although both women were at the height of their fame, neither was really young (the Duse was about thirty-seven, and the Bernhardt fully forty-five). Sarah Bernhardt drew a bewitching curtain of artifice over her age. Her frocks were splendidly rich ; she had the finished product of conscious art. Her face was covered with the cunning of an accomplished make-up artist. Through the loose braids of her auburn hair peeped incarnadined ears.

What Mr. Shaw called Bernhardt’s “ elaborate

Mona Lisa " smile came to the spectators through long carmined lips and languorous consciously-drooping eyelids.

The Duse came on the stage with lines of care and suffering frankly undisguised. The shadows on her face were grey, not crimson.

Sarah Bernhardt, with the subtleties of her marvellous technique, played upon the audience like a great musician. But she never entered into the leading character : she substituted herself for it.

Eleonora Duse produced the illusion of being infinite. She seemed to have no tricks, no mannerisms, and no method. Her art seemed a transcendent, overwhelming, quiet thing. It was something beyond voice, beyond gesture, beyond method. It was a transcendent, dramatic imagination ; perhaps the finest and most overwhelming in the history of the theatre.

It was remarked that the Duse actually blushed in " Magda." So real was her power of conscious emotional effort that her face turned crimson with confusion when she met the father of her child in " Magda."

As Mr. Shaw wrote of that astonishing exhibition of dramatic power : " Then a terrible thing happened to her. She began to blush. And in another moment she was conscious of it. The blush was slowly spreading and deepening until, after a few vain efforts to avert her face, she gave it up and hid her blush in her hands."

Surely it would be folly to call that dramatic technique. Only the most remarkable power of concentration and a sublimated human sympathy could make such a high moral note possible.

The first performance of " Cavalleria Rusticana " was in March, 1884, and was given by the Cesare Rossi Company at Turin. It was a noteworthy event—not

only in Eleonora Duse's career but also in Italian dramatic history—for the act of Giovanni Verga, in the time of romantic plays, seemed to be of impressioning audacity and realism. . . . Eleonora Duse created "Santuzza," Flavio Andò "Turiddu"; Teobaldo Checchi (her husband) and Cesare Rossi were also in the cast.

"Cavalleria Rusticana" became one of the favourite interpretations of the Duse, and was given with great success practically all over the world.

On the evening of April 9th, 1895, "Cavalleria Rusticana" was presented at Rome. Queen Marguerite was in the Royal box, and after the performance the Sovereign requested that the Duse come to her box. Signor Alhaiza, who had the honour of presenting the Royal invitation, had also the displeasure of returning to the Queen alone.

The Duse's refusal to pay homage to Italy's Queen was the subject of much discussion at the time.

"Will you tell Her Majesty," she said to Signor Alhaiza, "that I am honoured by her gracious invitation, but I am sure that she will understand that it would be most humiliating for an actress to go through the corridors of a theatre in her stage costume."

This reply following so closely on a similar one, when she had refused to receive the King of Würtemberg, started the report that the great actress was voicing anti-Royalist sentiments, which was not at that time, or ever, true.

The King of Würtemberg, assuming that Royalty was privileged, had gone on the stage between the acts, accompanied by his Marshal, whom he sent to the Duse's dressing-room with the request that she receive him at once.

"I beg you to thank the King," she said, when the Marshal had given her the august message, "for his compliments, which are highly honouring to me, and

to tell His Majesty that I am deeply grieved not to be able to receive him, but——”

The Marshal insisted, and to his insistence she replied, more emphatically, that she could not change her habits, even for a King, and that, as he had certainly been informed, she received only intimate friends in her dressing-room.

Determined to see her, the King himself knocked.

“ Who is it ? ” she called.

“ His Majesty, the King of Würtemberg.”

“ I am sorry ”—there was no agitation or nervous tremor in the lovely voice—“ but I have already told the Marshal that I cannot receive Your Majesty. In any case,” she added, “ I am dressing.”

“ I will wait,” came the ready reply.

“ It is not necessary, as I cannot make an exception to my rule—so I must beg Your Majesty to pardon me.”

When the King still remained outside her door she announced, through the maid, that, until he had returned to his box, she would not leave the dressing-room.

Disgruntled, humiliated, the King was obliged to go back to his box, where in a royal rage he remained until the performance was over.

The King of Sweden, however, had better luck, for he took the trouble to send a diplomatic letter in advance, in which he said :

“ It is not the King who asks an audience, but the most humble of your subjects.”

He was immediately received, and more than once after welcomed as a friend.

To me it was never a question of snobbism that made her refuse a Royal command, but the command itself. Eleonora Duse, with the person who knew

the art of making a proper request, was the most docile of women, and the knowledge that by receiving a person she was giving pleasure was always sufficient to make her accede to any reasonable demand. . . . She worked, and her time on the stage belonged to the public ; the performance over, she was a private citizen, therefore not subject to public command. . . . But also she was a woman destined to live through many tragedies, on and off the stage, and those very tragedies in time softened and sweetened the nature, as suffering over a love-affair teaches the value of friendship.

King Edward, while still the Prince of Wales, was in Cannes at the time that the Italians were playing there. Schurmann, the Duse's manager, hearing of the Royal visitor, hurried to the Prince to make his excuses for the bad condition of the theatre and stage.

"What difference does all that make?" the genial Prince Edward replied; "I would gladly go to a stable if necessary to hear the divine Duse. It isn't the frame that gives the painting its value."

Those who had the joy of seeing the divine Duse at the New Oxford Theatre, London, in 1923, and later during her tour of the United States, will agree with the late King Edward's saying: for had it been the frame that gave her her value the theatres would have been empty, not because of the theatres, but the miserable, cheap, cardboard sets.

The Duse's repertoire in general consisted of the works of foreign authors, with the exception of "*La Locandiera*," "*Scrollina*," "*The Ideal Wife*" by Marco Praga, and "*Cavalleria Rusticana*" by Verga, until the d'Annunzio tragedies were added.

During a performance of "*The Ideal Wife*," at Vienna, before a very scarce audience—because the

comedy was little known and so most of her admirers had kept away—a thin, little old man, with thick white hair, great penetrating eyes back of gold-rimmed spectacles, was discovered in a first-tier box, where, with extreme attention, he was following every word and gesture of the actress. . . . He was no less a personage than Theodor Mommsen. . . . His opinion was no doubt tempered by much of the adverse criticism already passed on the foreign celebrity; but before the virtue of Eleonora Duse's art even he became convinced, and after him many other elect Germans—thinkers, scholars and artists.

A famous German physiologist, in 1893 (during I do not know what play), deeply touched by the Duse's passionate acting and by her realism, and seeing his companions no less moved than he, pretended to have an acute cold in the head; in order to hide his agitation he coughed, cleared his throat violently, and then, drawing out his handkerchief, boldly dried his tears. . . .

Franz Lembach, the Bavarian portrait painter, before knowing the Duse personally, had been so impressed by the mobility of her face that he had done no less than thirty sketches of her from memory, as he had seen her in various parts; and these sketches practically covered the walls of his studio in the Borghese Palace, Rome.

When at length he succeeded in being presented, he asked permission to paint her portrait, a permission which she gave reluctantly, for to sit quiet, the expression unchanging, was almost an impossibility for her—and from experience she knew the difficulty of remaining long in a man's company without his falling in love. . . . When at length she did go to the Red Studio, as it was called, and saw the sketches already made, she knew that her fear for him was a reality; but his love was for the artist more than for

the woman. . . . His portrait, with his baby, is the most beautiful one that was ever painted of her.

Though Eleonora Duse was ever in love with love, and a greater lover than actress (she herself said that), she never wished to be loved unless she could return what was offered her, and while, like every great woman from the beginning of history, she loved many much, a few more, and one most—she loved the most one at a time, and the times were at sufficiently long and rare intervals.

Of the numerous men who crossed her path, many were sincere and true friends and nothing more. Many who helped her in her career may have been considered as lovers, for the world is ever ready to jump at conclusions ; but I, like others, have studied her life from every point of view, have gone into minute and intimate details, and still I can honestly state that her friends were legion, and among them all certainly none more loyal or faithful ever lived than the grand old Roman gentleman, Count Guiseppe Primoli, who had known her better than anyone from his youth ; and who perhaps helped her over more difficult places than the world can ever know—yet when asked for certain information that only he could give regarding her life, he replied :

“ Much as I should like to help you, of the intimate life of Eleonora Duse I can tell you nothing, as it was her greatest wish that what was private remain private.”

No man could have greater respect for a friend who is gone, or in the loyalty of his words show himself a more perfect gentleman.

Her friends and admirers were in truth legion—her lovers few, and, had divorce existed in Italy, no doubt those few would have been reduced to one, the man of her inexperienced youth, who it is said would have married her had he lived.



ELEONORA DUSE WITH LEMBACH BABY.

Famous portrait by Franz Lembach.

The famous German artist, Adolf Merzel, going by chance into an engravers' shop at Frankfort, encountered the Duse coming out with a portrait of the eighty-year-old painter and several copies of his paintings. . . . The crabbed old man was certainly not a person to give way easily to feminine fascination. . . . Yet he watched her with interest as she walked away, then grunted that in art the Duse was "genial," and asked gruffly for a photograph of her.

Some days later a mutual friend invited the actress and the painter to lunch. The Duse and Merzel got along first rate, without either one understanding the language of the other ; and on taking leave the venerable artist anticipated her wish, and instead of kissing her hand he kissed her lightly on the brow, while she in turn, in appreciation of his greatness, gently pressed her lips to the fine artistic old hand.

After the curtain had fallen on the last act of "Claude's Wife" at the farewell performance in Vienna, on the evening of December 4th, 1899, the entire audience called vociferously for the Duse. . . . The curtain rose again, and from the upper wings a shower of choicest flowers descended on the great actress. Too moved by the unusual homage to speak, she merely smiled her thanks. The ovation continued. The flowers rained on her ; she stooped and gathered an armful, and placed them with delicate abandon about a bust of Beethoven, which, unobserved in a dark corner of the stage, had taken part in the evening's tragic performance.

With one of those rapid, unexpected inspirations that so frequently characterised her letters and conversations, she had felt the need of dividing her honours with the most admirable genius of the nation then acclaiming her.

After her delightful act the applause of approba-

tion continued, and twenty times she had to come before the curtain to acknowledge her appreciation.

The Duse's homage to Beethoven inspired a Viennese poet to the writing of a strong soulful poem published in the *Wiener Abendpost*, of December 5th, 1899.

One of her early and very successful creations was "Frou Frou," but after a certain evening she refused to play it again. . . . At the fatal time the company was incomplete, and when there was a child's part it was the custom to get the prettiest youngster to be found in the neighbourhood of the theatre, and to put him on without a rehearsal. . . . During the last act of Meilhac and Helevy's masterpiece, the child was taken to the dying Frou Frou for her to bid him farewell. He was a lovely baby of four, picked up on the street for the occasion, and without warning improvised actor.

When he found himself on the lap of a beautiful lady, pale and sweet, who looked at him with sad, tender affection, overcome by the unexpected gentleness the child began to caress her face. Frou Frou embraced him warmly, and the child returned her kisses with the effusion of a heart deprived of tenderness—then, seeming to realise that she was ill, he burst into tears. The maternal instinct reawakened in the Duse, a sad vision reanimated her spirit, she began to cry with the child—and when they tried to take him away he clung passionately to her, his little face wet with his and her tears. . . . The physical force necessary to detach the arms encircling her neck left her—and that evening, held to life by her son Frou Frou was unable to die.

Eleonora Duse was great, famous wherever a theatre existed, but the real grandness, originality,

the spiritual development of the woman did not reach its perfection until when, nearly forty years of age, she knew and loved Gabriele d'Annunzio.

For some time before their meeting she had desired to make the acquaintance of the rising young poet, a man some five years her junior, whose written words had so deeply stirred her sensibility. Yet she did not in any way seek to have him presented, for with a psychic foresight she knew that it would come about in time, and would be the means of changing both their lives. . . . He was to open a new field for her, just as she was destined to be the herald of his fame—a fame that would live long after she was gone, and their much-discussed love forgotten . . . and it was above all because of what she felt she could do for him that she desired the meeting.

So it came about at Rome, on the stage of the Valle Theatre during an entr'acte of "Camille," the play of which she was already tired but which she interpreted as no other actress ever had, that he found her leaning against an upright, crying, and trying vainly to hide the tears which the scene of farewell with Armande always brought.

In a burst of youthful admiration the gallant poet, bowing deeply, exclaimed :

"O grand Amatrice !"

In the marvellously rendered scene that he had witnessed he had suddenly seen the realisation of his dreams of future greatness. The grand actress would vitalise any part that he could write, and with her power that celebrity had brought her, force his work on the public, even beyond the confines of Italy—his name would become known all over the world ; glory after glory would come to him.

To his salutation she replied with a smile, and for him she dried her tears.

The following day great wonderful red roses filled

her apartment with their subtle perfume, as the words of the poet, with an indefinable exquisite sadness, filled her heart ; for even in the beauty of the roses there was the strange faint shadow of coming events casting itself before. . . .

Roses had always been her favourite flower, white roses—and his were red.

Everything that had ever counted in her life disappeared before the fascination of the roses. In an instant she felt that she had never lived, never loved, known joy or sorrow. She was as a new woman ready for the love and passion that he could offer her. . . . She was pure in thought and act ; the events of the years of nomadic life had passed over her without entering the part of her soul reserved for his coming. . . . Across her heart his name was to be written, cancelling those already there.

In the passionate red roses she saw as in a glass the youthful ardour waiting to be sapped by her unlimited experience. . . . Saw his suffering as well as hers ; knew that the union of their souls might be lasting.

To Gabriele d'Annunzio her voice, at times firm, at others vacillating, warmed by a mysterious inner light, soulful, was as a spiritual essence that hour by hour more deeply impregnated his very being.

She was indeed going to open up a new road for him, become the heart and soul of his work—what she could give him was more than love, more than success . . . there would be a perfect communion of souls.

“ To advance, ever advance,” was his motto, “ to go always higher. Every hour, every minute one must fight, affirm against destruction, diminution, violation, contagion. Every hour, every minute keep an eye on the myth ; concentrate every energy on that, never hesitating or faltering.”

In that heyday of youth, victory was as necessary as breathing. A furious will to fight life was awakened in the agile Latin blood, aided and abetted by the greatness of the woman, who, in her first profound glance and firm, warm handclasp, had proclaimed herself his friend.

In the sensuously matured body so full of voluptuous knowledge he had not seen the love of a night, but instead the admirable instrument of a new art, the divulger of grand poetry : she who in her changing personality could incarnate the future artifice of beauty ; she whose unforgettable voice must carry the reawakening word to the world.

Not for love of the woman, but in the promised hope of glory did he begin his relation with Eleonora Duse.

The first venture to the United States was in 1893, when she met with only moderate success artistically and financially. The second visit, in 1896, after continual European triumphs, when Russia, Germany, Austria, and England had all been loud in their enthusiasm, New York, not to appear less appreciative, also went mad over her.

From the moment of landing she was besieged by reporters. Their curiosity irritated the reticent side of her character, and made her retire more than ever into her shell.

Tired by the long trip, absorbed by her work, she stoutly refused all interviews, thus succeeding in putting the entire Press against her.

Infuriated by the insistent desire to fly from publicity, her manager went to the Duse's hotel, hoping, by plain speaking, giving her a piece of his mind, he might be able to convince the irascible Eleonora of the mistake she was making.

" Your attitude towards the Press in general, and

the reporters in particular, has just cost me the paltry sum of one hundred thousand lire!" he burst out angrily. "You could have won them by a pleasant word; but you didn't have one handy, did you? You're sure of your pay, and naturally don't give a d— about my money!"

"When you put it that way"—she gave him a frigid glance—"I lose all interest in your affairs, and there is no power in the world that could make me see a reporter now! No power in the world!"—she snapped her fingers wrathfully—"and least of all you!"

"Anything but dealing with a capricious woman!" He walked the length of the room twice, and then changed his tactics. "It's your indifference that hurts them"—he modulated his voice to a pleading tone; "here the actresses take what you call curiosity as the highest compliment. . . . You're playing a losing game this way: in America they read about the actress before they go to see her."

She refused to heed his argument.

"I don't understand"—she continued to be exasperated—"why I haven't the right to my days for myself."

In the midst of the discussion Mrs. G——, a famous society reporter, was announced.

The manager watched the Duse anxiously.

Before replying to the servant waiting to know if she would see the lady, she rose, looked into a mirror, then, turning tragically to the worried man in a melodramatic pose, said in deep sepulchral tones:

"To be—or not to be?"

The manager burst out laughing, and the despised reporter was received.

"I hope you will excuse me, madam," Eleonora Duse said with her most gracious smile, "but as I am a stranger here I do not know the habits of your

country, and I believe because of my ignorance I have been accused of lacking respect for the Press. I assure you I do respect the Press, but naturally I couldn't receive all the newspaper men in New York. . . . Through you I should like to make an appeal to your women, your broad-minded, big American women. Jointly and severally we must help each other, and I count on you to bring my just protest to the attention of your countrywomen."

Mrs. G——, flattered by the responsibility, readily agreed to be the Duse's messenger.

"Will you ask the women why a labourer who works during the day has the right to rest at night, while I, who work at night, am not permitted to play in the daytime? For it is work, and thankless work, to reply to those who present themselves at my hotel without knowing me, under the pretext that an actress belongs to the public, and that he who pays has the right to know who he goes to applaud, or hoot."

Mrs. G—— had no suggestion to offer.

"On the contrary," the Duse continued, "it seems to me that one should be a novelty on the stage, instead of having already shown the spectator how the toy that is to amuse him is made."

Mrs. G—— departed happy, and two days later the Duse gave her first *matinée*.

The article had appeared and been read; the appeal to the American women heard. The protestation sounded legitimate, and women crowded to the performance to frantically acclaim Marguerite Gautier.

The first three evening performances had only brought seven hundred dollars to the box-office; the *matinée* took in three thousand dollars.

From then on Eleonora Duse's stay in America was a continued triumph all along the line. On every tram-car, and flaming from the tops of high buildings in illuminated letters, the magic words were to be seen :

THE PASSING STAR: ELEONORA DUSE.

And when on certain evenings the passing star did not play, the eternal stars twinkled understandingly in the great blue vault, and Eleonora Duse would go out alone, on foot, unknown, through the streets of New York.

One evening, going up Broadway, at Madison Square she saw a crowd gathered about an old man. She stopped impulsively, glad for once to be a spectator instead of the rare bird. . . . She went close and mingled with the other curious ones.

The old man with an astrologer's beard was manipulating a long telescope, and explaining the mysteries of the sky.

She recognised him as a fellow-countryman, and pushed her way through the crowd to his side.

"You are Italian?" she said when close to him. "And you show the stars?"

"Per servirla," the man replied. "Six cents a star."

"Here is a dollar—show me all of the Milky Way."

And, watched closely by the curious, who could not understand the foreign tongue, amidst the rumble and roar of the clanging cable cars, heavy wagons, and electric vehicles, she found an infinite sweetness in the contemplation of the stars, her first close confidential friends.

The old man, proud to have an Italian to whom he could show his superiority, fixed his telescope on one luminous point and then another, explaining, with a little more than his traditional eloquence:

"This is Mars, see how red his light is? And this is Venus—ah! those two understand each other!"

"And this one?"

"That is the polar star."

"The big one to the east?"

"Sì, signora, but the dollar is finished." He turned the telescope away.

"Wait a minute!" she opened her bag happily. "I'll pay immediately; give me another quarter of an hour of sky—a dollar's worth of stars!"

She returned slowly, feeling the ground firm under her feet, and every tram that passed clamorously bore the same announcement in flaming letters:

THE PASSING STAR: ELEONORA DUSE.

And the passing star as she entered her hotel paused at the doorway to smile good-night to the eternal stars.

In a week after the discussion with her manager not only did she no longer need advertising, but her name was serving to advertise others. . . . Posters everywhere possible called attention to something used by the Duse, even to an immense pair of eyes, one laughing and the other crying, with an inscription advising the public that Mrs. X——, in ten sittings, could arrange any eyes à la Duse.

Make-up, of which she had a horror and scarcely ever used, was being revenged on her by pretending to divulge her secrets of stage effect, on the theory that nothing succeeds like success.

In passing to and from the theatre she frequently heard a dialogue similar to the following:

"What is Mme. Duse playing this evening?"

"'La Locandiera.'"

"How many acts?"

"Three—followed by 'Cavalleria.'"

"How does she dress?"

"Soubrette in the comedy, peasant in the drama"

"And to-morrow?"

“ ‘ La Signora delle Camélie.’ ”

“ How many acts ? ”

“ Five.”

“ How many costumes ? ”

“ Five.”

“ Does she die ? ”

“ During an entire act.”

“ Thanks, I’ll come to-morrow.”

While in New York she posed for Edourdo Gordigiani, her countryman, and son of the celebrated Florentine painter.

This portrait was, and probably still is, to be seen at the Champs de Mars, Paris. The painting is made with opal tints dominating, as though to symbolise the talent that reflects the changing shades of the human heart. The pose, which is as exquisite as the colouring, shows her seated in delicate abandon ; the fine Italian head, devoid of artifice, rests on the lovely hands ; and she is looking far, far away, perhaps across the seas to one who is awaiting her coming.

From the time that she had her own company Eleonora Duse rarely gave more than sixty performances a year : for owing to delicate health she was obliged to rest more than she worked ; yet even when not forced to travel the spirit that knew no repose was continually on the move, for a phrase in a book, the sound of distant music, the memory of flowers bought in a certain place, and a desire for other scenes and people would instantly be born, and in a few hours’ time she would be on her way to the sea, mountains, or even the desert.

Though from the beginning to the end she worked with heart and conscience, her one great longing was to leave the stage. Many years before she retired she wrote the following letter to a friend :

“ You have known me during the so-called happy period of my life ; but I doubt if I have ever been

able to hide from myself, sufficiently for you not to know, that across the so-called happiness of the scene it was never success that I sought in Art, but refuge.

"Now the hour of justice has come, the kind hour, the harvest hour, and I am on the point of going home. I have worked years and years—all my youth—that had to be, and now comes the rest which I need. I have made enough to live on—I am content, and in three months I will have finished my heavy yearly task.

"I have the greatest of all riches : that of not desiring them.

"I have arranged a tiny home, with white-washed walls, on the top floor of an old Venetian palace. It is under the roof, so to speak, with a grand ogive window overlooking the entire city : that is where I am going.

"The autumn is tranquil, the air and my soul as well."

The sentiment that inspired her to leave the stage for good was never discouragement, but the hope of finding in life far from the theatre the fullness of truth and beauty.

Many times, attracted by the sunshine and solitude of the desert, she escaped from Europe to rest in Egypt, each time only to be recalled by the theatre alarm just when the grand Sphinx had begun to divulge his secret.

More than once, fascinated, she remained deaf to the call, obliterating the theatrical world from her mind, and in consequence having to pay considerable sums for the breaking of contracts ; losing, by a day of forgetfulness, the fruit of a winter's work.

At the beginning of 1897 she was in Russia with her company. The engagement was to begin on January 15th. On the evening of the 14th she sent for her manager to tell him that she was not in a fit condition

even to think of acting. The opening date was then changed to the 19th, followed by a second change to the 24th. That day the Duse decided that the snow absorbed her strength, and insisted upon a third postponement.

From week to week this kept up until February 16th, to the disgust of the waiting public and anxious critics.

Contrary to the manager's fears, the waiting only seemed to augment the number of reservations.

The company during this unexpected rest were being paid regularly, and having a glorious time roaming about Moscow, going to Russian theatres, seeing the city, and not enjoying the cold.

All went well until the afternoon of the 16th, when the manager was called in haste to the Duse's hotel. As soon as he came into the room she announced :

"I am very sorry to have to inform you that if I stay here another day I shall either die from the cold or go into galloping consumption ; so I have decided to leave this evening for Nice. You will see that the company is paid in full and sent back to Milan, and return all money taken for tickets."

All his prayers were in vain : she had made up her mind to leave Russia at no matter what cost. So there was no alternative for him but to pay the company as she had ordered and refund the public's money.

When he presented himself at the box-office to speak about the payments to be made to the public, amounting to 10,000 lire, the window was politely closed in his face.

The accounts showed that the month passed uselessly at Moscow had cost the management something like 100,000 lire. Money lost, but fortunately there was the possibility of making it up somewhere else.

The "Smara" of youth, as the years increased, became always more frequent and was the desperation of every manager she ever had.

With the passing of the days her love for Gabriele d'Annunzio was growing, robbing her of the repose that she needed, and making life far from him impossible. When away from Italy her one desire was to return, to be near enough to help him with her criticism and sympathetic understanding of the great work he was doing.

On leaving Russia she was unable to return to Italy via Germany, the easiest route, as she had refused Kaiser Wilhelm's invitation to play there.

At the end of April she was back in Italy, her mania to leave the stage again upon her; even the nearness of her poet had not the power to calm her.

She had planned to dismiss the company and to go to Egypt, when a telegram came begging her at last to play in Paris.

Paris was her secret ambition, the one ambition she had never been able to realise.

With the arrival of the telegram she began a consideration of the enormous difficulties to be encountered. The grand Adelaide Ristori was the last Italian actress to venture on the French stage; her success had been clamorous, but she had rare classic beauty, aided by the costumes of Francesca, and Pia dei Tolomei—types of any country and age. The Duse, on the contrary, was not noted for her beauty, and had to present herself *à la Parisien*, in appearance an imitation of the great actresses whom she had applauded from time to time during her short stays in Paris.

For her to be mistress of the situation she needed to feel the theatre vibrate with her, believe with her. Could she affront the difficult Parisian public—the

public used to perfection, profoundly critical, and ever on the alert to ridicule ?

Though not easy to please, there was one thing certain : no public in the world, when contemplating real merit, would be more generous with its praise.

After all, it remained with the artist to create the illusion. If she were able to recite in their language the conquest would be easier, but she had to address them in an unknown tongue ; and more than that, the Italian play in Paris had become synonymous with music, and any production from over the Alps took on immediately the air of an opera. . . . Camille made them recall " Traviata," and that would make her merely a singer who had lost her voice.

While she was meditating, and trying to decide just what she should reply to the telegram offering her a theatre, Gabriele d'Annunzio was announced.

Without a word she handed him the telegram, her deep eyes searching the reply in his.

" From Paris ? " he asked, without opening it.

She nodded.

" You hesitate ? "

" Certainly. I have never dared to affront the Parisian public, for they are too used to perfection in ensemble and personality."

" There you are wrong. You know what a noble, unhopd-for reception my work has found in France. It is the French tradition to open wide the doors to artists from across the seas and over the mountains. I am convinced that in Paris you will find, more than anywhere else, attentive and receptive hearts. . . . Go, dear friend, go, by all means ! "

" All that you say is possible"—she was still uncertain—" but what good is it to have the public attention if they do not understand the language ? "

" You will astonish them just the same by the



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GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO.

multiple facial expressions, and by the musical Italian phrases." He spoke with absolute assurance.

"Lovely music! My repertoire consists of badly-translated well-known French plays. If I could give 'La Citta Morta'——"

"'La Citta Morta' is reserved for the Renaissance."

"And it's precisely the Renaissance that they offer me."

"Really?" He opened the telegram. "Then there is no reason for you to hesitate—what more can you ask than to have the doors of the Renaissance opened for you by Sarah the Magnificent?"

"Granting that you are right, to pay honour to the Queen of the Poets you must give me rhymes and images. Improvise a poetical work for me." There was doubt and pleading in her eyes.

"What could I turn out in a week? The mere idea is mad!"

"Then give me the rôle of a mad woman!"

"You will go to Paris?"

"On that condition only." The words were firm, but the voice implored.

"I must try then to satisfy you." He smiled.

"I want a formal promise."

"All right!" One after the other he raised the beautiful hands to his lips. "In ten days you shall have your madness."

The "madness," as he called it, was "Sogno di un Mattino di Primavera." The first of May she had the completed manuscript, and was ready to begin rehearsals.

"I have it!" she exclaimed proudly as she met Count Primoli in the hall of the Hotel Bristol, Rome.

"What have you?" he asked.

"The play d'Annunzio promised me!" Radiantly she extended a neatly-bound velvet book for his inspection. "And in order to put it in its proper frame I'm taking my actors to the country, to rehearse

in the fresh green fields, among the budding flowers. Ten days, only ten days of rest, then—Paris ! ”

“ You will open with . . . ? ” Primoli the kind friend silently rejoiced with her in her enthusiasm, but was afraid for the success of the too-hurried work.

“ I’m undecided between ‘ Magda,’ ‘ Claude’s Wife,’ and ‘ Camille.’ ”

“ All plays admirably done by Sarah.”

“ Alas, I know that only too well ! ”

“ The advice of a friend would be to take something else to the Paris public.”

“ But what ? It isn’t my fault if the grand universal artist has tried everything, and left on each creation an indelible mark. I would much rather not give anything of hers, but as every play worth while has passed through her hands naturally my repertoire is composed of a small part of hers.”

“ Why not give an Italian play ? ”

“ Which one ? I don’t feel ours, I mean the tragedies of yesterday. To have something really fine I would have to go back to the Greek, and the time for that is not yet ripe. Allora ? ”

“ What about Shakespeare ? ”

“ Of course there is always Shakespeare,” she admitted ; “ but apart from several sublime creations, which are not in my line, in his plays the woman’s part is always sacrificed. . . . I often think ”—she digressed for a second from the subject in hand—“ that if, during his time, there had been a great actress like Sarah Bernhardt, what a part he would have written for her.”

“ True, but that doesn’t settle your problem. You hadn’t thought of ‘ La Locandiera ’ ? ”

“ No, I had forgotten poor old Goldoni ! But he is so typical of the seventeenth century, and Venice of that time—still there is a certain freshness that serves as a repose. But I can’t give that all the time ;

continual joking doesn't agree with my kind of beauty. If you force me to comedy you will be sending me back to my grandfather's school ; and once one has graduated, it's not amusing to return."

" Then if there are so many serious objections in the way of ' La Locandiera,' give a modern Italian play."

" Which ? "

" ' Cavalleria.' "

" Hm ! That was a daring venture ten years ago, an attempt at a new type of theatre. I was perhaps the first to appreciate the work of a grand and serious talent, and I created the part with respect, and always played it with pleasure. But after the popularity of Mascagni's opera in Paris, wouldn't the public feel that the drama lacked music ? "

" No, being already known it would merely make things easier for you. You can give that, and other Italian plays as well : Giacosa's ' Tristi Amori,' and Praga's ' Moglie Ideale.' "

" They are also interesting ventures, but in both of them I represent a little woman, essentially Italian, and local in character, that could not be interesting in any other country. And then, even though the plays are charming, neither rôle is anything special. . . . If I have a certain internal flame how can I reveal it in such parts ? . . . For this time I am afraid I must content myself by offering the Paris public such samples of Italian repertoire as ' Cavalleria,' which is not unknown to them, the Goldoni comedy, and d'Annunzio's dramatic poem : thus representing the theatre of yesterday"—she paused—"and perhaps that of to-morrow. . . . For the balance of my engagement I will give French masterpieces, where one finds a rôle as well as a play. . . . After all, why shouldn't they be interested to see a French creation interpreted by an Italian temperament ? "

"In short, you are practically limiting yourself to Sarah's repertoire?"

"To Sarah's repertoire?" she shrugged. "I have said that it is universal, and goes from Phèdre to Spiritism, in passing from the dramas of Victor Hugo to Alexandre Dumas' comedies. That I think composes the entire French theatre; and it is in order to have the honour of playing a tiny bit of the French theatre in Paris that I am going to the Renaissance."

"Am I right or wrong? Who knows?"

"You must have confidence in your name," Primoli hastened to reassure her.

"No one knows it in Paris."

"Then put your faith in your anagram."

"What?"

"Victor Hugo would have said: 'Duse—Deus!'"

"Oh! I had never thought of that!"

Even if Gabriele d'Annunzio had not kept his promise she would have gone to Paris, for Count Primoli, who had aided her materially in making the arrangements, would certainly not have permitted her to back out at the last minute.

It was the most brilliant season of the year, just before the Grand Prix, when she opened at the Renaissance Theatre. . . . The details of that first success would fill an entire book. The actress was acclaimed as no foreign actress had ever been; the woman fêted on every possible occasion.

Sarah Bernhardt, who had invited the Duse to her own theatre, forgetting professional etiquette, hermetically closed her dressing-room; and the first night, hidden in a stage box, jealously watched her rival's success. After the fourth act, unable to withstand the continual applause, she came forward and, standing in the front of the box, looked towards the audience. After a few moments she was recognised, and the

applause immediately turned from the Duse to herself.

The critics were unanimous in their praise of the famous Italian actress. To give the translations of the many Press notices would be to repeat again and again the same praise ; enough that such writers as Henri Rochfort, Leon Bernard-Derosne, Francis Sarcey, Emanuel Arine, Gustav Laroumet, Henri Fauquier, Felice Duquesnel, Ernest Tissot, Don Blasius, Emil Faguet, William Archer, Edmond Got, Paul Taillade, Gustav le Bargy, Coquelin Cadet, Eugene Silvain, Louis Largier, and many others of lesser fame found in her all the perfection of dramatic art.

In Paris, the home of Molière, in the sanctuary of Art, accessible to few of the élite, she, a stranger, a foreigner, entered as *souveraine*, saluted and acclaimed by the biggest actors and actresses of France.

While triumph was following triumph, and to all who knew her Eleonora Duse seemed happy, she wrote from Paris :

“ This anguish of Paris has invigorated the firmness of the affection that fills my heart for our theatrical life. . . . It consoles me to realise that Art can be raised by the burning of the inner life.

“ I am annoyed, tormented by a thousand things (that I don't wish to lament over nor even speak of) that have come up during my engagement here. When the heart is full one remains silent, when the trouble is really deep one is also silent. . . . Silence is one of the many noble sides of love.”

Returning to Italy after the season in Paris she began to announce her disgust for the Italian plays. The announcement was received by the public with

sceptic surprise, almost disdain. Italian authors had been working for her for some years—for her alone (and, as a matter of fact, had turned out very little, if anything, worthy of her talent). If she accused them of abandoning her, in that she was wrong, for they were doing the best they knew how, but that best simply was not good enough.

When she gave "Camille," in Paris, there was not even standing room to be had in the theatre; but, beautiful as the drama was, and is, in order to go on pleasing the exigent public she had to find something new.

"'Magda,' 'La Moglie Ideale,' 'Claude's Wife,' 'Camille,'" she affirmed, "are all good enough plays, I'm not condemning them: merely for me they are moss-grown. *Basta! basta!*" (enough) "I must have something new! True, in 'Camille' there is still a thread of gold that keeps the imitation pearls of the drama together: the gold thread of passion. But the rest! the rest! I myself am humiliated in the part of the person I am forced to represent. And often the disgust becomes so great, and so proud the protest of my conscience, that it seems to me that from one moment to the next I must lose the physical acting force, and the nervous currents that move the arms will not arrive, and that I will not be able to awaken my intellect, and may against my will remain stupidly inert before the expectant public. At that time my one desire is to have the footlights put out, to throw the manuscripts of all the parts into the fire, pack my stupid actress luggage, and to fly!"

And still she insisted:

"I need to try something new: for myself as well as my public. What I have done up to now, what I continue to do, no longer satisfies me. I have the sensation of something being re-born inside. In the plays that I give I feel that all the falseness is falling

away—in fact, has already fallen, and that, like a nude person, I am presenting something mortifying to my listeners. I have a vague desire, an indefinite aspiration towards a form of art that will respond more directly and more profoundly to my present state of mind.”

Nothing was yet in sight, and, as several times before and after, she was obliged to turn to her dreams of the Greek tragedies.

“I have a deeply sincere faith in the inevitable return to the beautiful Greek works,” she would insist when questioned by her friends. “The movement, the lines of our art, are the movements, the colour, the lines of corruption in Art. Even the language that we now speak is corrupt.”

Whether she was right or wrong will not be known for some time to come, as up to the present few actors have had the courage to revive the ancient Greek plays. Gustave Salvini, and Annibale Ninchi are the only Italian actors of this generation who have put on Greek works, and their success has been far from clamorous.

In September of that year, 1897, both as woman and actress Eleonora Duse's friends believed her to be contented. . . . Various schemes had fallen through, yet she was tranquil, and confident of her plans for the coming winter.

In the early autumn she was at her “palazzino” in Venice, resting.

And it was there that Gabriele d'Annunzio received the inspiration for the plays that she was to make famous; though they were not written until later.

“You could never lose yourself,” she said to him one evening as their gondola moved slowly over the smooth waters of the Grand Canal. “How sure you are of what you are going to do. It seems to me that

you carry your destiny in your own hands ; and that only pride could ever make you tremble, or touch your heart."

Those words summed up her opinion of him. He had put himself on a pedestal too far above the world of ordinary mortals for natural happenings or suffering ever to reach him. . . . Only through his pride could his heart ever be touched.

The marvel of those days together, the long, long hours of intellectual intercourse, unforgettable hours, were her treasured memory for many years.

Wonderful as the time was spent in each other's company, there were moments when her soul seemed to rest in mid-air, thrown there by the violent waves of regret, and desire. . . . The pride and intensity of her hard and pertinacious work—her ambition held in check only by a too-limited field—were constant torments ; and over and above the conflicting emotions there was the continual fear of losing him, the absolute assurance that his love was transitory, and that it was only a question of a short time before she would again be alone. . . . This ever-present fear kept her from living to the full the shining hours, which even his protestations of eternal love and devotion left fearful.

And it was that torment which he felt and saw constantly in her eyes which drew Gabriele d'Annunzio to her. She was the woman of sorrows, but never of a morbid character : on the contrary, she was gay and full of exuberant life, but—the sadness was born in her, and never, even in her gayest hours, quite left her.

The dreams of a grander, more imperious art that would be as a signal of light and instrument of suggestion, all his arrogant, high-brow dreams, his insatiable needs of glory and pleasure merged into a tumultuous desire to possess the very heartbeats of the lonely woman, the nomad, who it seemed to him had gathered

silently together, even in the folds of her dress, the frenzy of the far-away multitudes whom she had purified by the divinity of her art.

Every thought that she had for him was unselfish. The fight she made for the ultimate success of his plays shows that her wish was to make his name grand and had nothing to do with her personally, for her name was already grander than his could ever be. In the perfect maturity of her genius she could do what no other actress could, and with audacious courage she launched and made him, unaided. Without her he would have been a fine writer of the Italian language and nothing more.

For those who do not know d'Annunzio's work I would like to say that his novels are composed of a very poor short-story plot, with long-drawn-out, marvellously-expressed descriptions. A mere sunset fills five or six pages, and so on through the long book. . . . His dramas—I have never heard or read them in English and do not even know if they have ever been translated—given by Eleonora Duse: "La Citta Morta" (The Dead City), "La Gioconda," and "Francesca di Rimini," were interesting, and because of the perfect poetic measure, are ranked among the world's classics, but in them, as in all his work, the grand idea is absolutely missing.

Eleonora Duse in time will be nothing but a myth as other great actresses before her have become; but d'Annunzio's work will live on, in Italian literature at least, and be recognised, after Dante, as the purest Italian ever written, and perhaps the most beautiful. And in the reflection of his glory Eleonora Duse will be remembered for such plays as she created for him.

A notable event in the theatrical world of Italy, an event which unfortunately bore little fruit, was the Duse's attempt at something different in the presentation

of "L'Abbesse de Jouarre," Enrico Panzacchi's translation of Ernest Renan's unusual drama.

Whether the Duse made this mistaken attempt out of affection for Panzacchi, who it was known was desperately in love with her, or because she believed in the work, is not known.

The critics of that time (1896) say that the presentation at the Valle Theatre, Rome, was a complete success. The fact that the play does not appear in her repertoire shows that the success must have been very limited.

To give her repertoire, with the dates and theatres where she played, is possible, but hardly interesting enough for readers outside of Italy to make it worth while.

During the second trip to the United States, which was a memorable one in the annals of American theatrical history, Mrs. Cleveland, wife of the President, gave a luncheon at the White House in honour of Eleonora Duse. A similar favour had not been conferred on Sarah Bernhardt, though her success at Washington had been quite equal to that of the Duse.

The critic of the *New York Evening Sun*, after seeing her in "Camille," wrote :

"To arrive at the height of Eleonora Duse's performance of Marguerite Gautier, it would be necessary to put Clara Morris and Sarah Bernhardt together. . . ."

Others spoke of the sincerity of her acting, of her magnetism, genius, etc., and as always the praise was unanimous.

"Sogno di un Mattino di Primavera" was given in Italy at the Brunetti Theatre, Bologna. The first evening of the same play at Rome was as complete a failure as the performance in Paris and Bologna had been.

The Valle Theatre was packed. Queen Marguerite was in the Royal box, so there could be no whistling or hooting as the Italians are accustomed to do when not pleased with the play or an actor. That evening, unable to express themselves loudly, they took the direct contrary, and when the curtain fell on "Sogno" a silence as of the tomb reigned. But the minute the curtain rose on the first act of "La Locandiera" a formidable ovation broke forth of "Vive Goldoni!"

D'Annunzio smilingly assisted from a stage box at the glacial reception offered to his first dramatic work given by Eleonora Duse.

The Duse was neither calm nor serene. She was in fact visibly irritated by the public's lack of appreciation, and did nothing to hide her anger towards those who had failed to understand. . . . And to demonstrate her faith in the poet and his work, she dedicated herself, from that day, almost exclusively to the study and divulgement of d'Annunzio's works.

The second, and more successful venture in the d'Annunzio field, was "La Gioconda." The discussions which the tragedy aroused only served as an incentive to her determination to carry the work as well as the author to glory. The opinions were diverse—there were those who praised it, others who condemned.

Granting the grandeur and fascination of style, the marvellous poetry of the descriptions, the sweetness of the tone, it was the negation of theatrical sense. The characters, facts, the fight, the catastrophe were essentially theatrical, but it was a work more to be read than acted: for while the words were magnificent, the ideas high, the style fine, it appealed to the mind but left the heart cold—in brief, it was a poem to be recited.

The genial idea of a tour for Eleonora Duse and Ermete Zacconi was d'Annunzio's; and as they

were to give " La Gioconda " exclusively, he made all the necessary bookings.

They toured the principal Italian cities, received with fervour everywhere. Never before or since have actors been given such warm receptions. Eleonora Duse and Ermete Zacconi ! The greatest actress and the grandest actor together. The Duse and Zacconi ! Never before were two actors so totally different put side by side with a happier result. The fresh, delicate tones of the Duse alternating with the almost crude notes of Zacconi were like the melodious sighs of a violin and the dark ominous groans of the bass-viol. Zacconi was marvellous, the Duse was marvellous—but together the marvel lost much of its intense reality. However, the engagement aroused an enthusiasm that was both artistically and financially satisfying.

The tour over, Luigi Rasi, the greatest young actor in Italy, was engaged as leading man to substitute Zacconi for the season 1899-1900.

With her actors Eleonora Duse was always most lenient, and considerate in her criticisms, showing infinite patience with those unused to her stage direction, and by the entire company she was held in the greatest respect.

Her humours were well known, but seldom understood even by those who had worked for years with her. The bursts of favouritism when one actor or actress of the company would be treated to more than special consideration and the others ignored were a source of jealousy, and often amusement, to those who were out of favour, for experience had taught them that with the change of wind she would change her mind, and select a new favourite or recall an old one. . . . She was almost the personification of vacillation. A new friend could influence her against an old one or *vice versa*. She would give her word and five minutes after have a new idea that revolutionised the

first opinion sufficiently to change her mind completely. . . . She was capable of loving and disliking at ten-minute intervals—yet those who understood her, if anyone ever truly did, learned to put up with the inconstancy of idea and eternal caprices, for even in her moments of nervousness and bursts of quick temper there was a subtle, irresistible fascination that forced one to keep on loving her.

To return to September, 1899. She had become *La Signora*, the grand Duse—not, as before, the dear companion in art, the delightful Eleonora—so that when she arrived on the scene for rehearsals she was greeted by a respectful silence, and in silence the rehearsals began. Only when she had shown her humour did any member of the company dare to speak, unless spoken to.

While in Berlin a call for a full rehearsal of "*La Gioconda*" without parts had been given. . . . The rehearsal was progressing merrily, notwithstanding the fact that it is a tragedy, when a whisper passed over the stage that cast an immediate serious silence over all :

"*La Signora.*"

The Duse was distrait that evening, and scarcely even acknowledged the discreet "*buona sera,*" that came from all sides. With an annoyed wave of her hand she motioned them to their places and immediately took up her cue.

Luigi Rasi was an intelligent man, an actor at home in all the leading rôles of the Duse repertoire, but "*La Gioconda*" was new to him, and furthermore he was taking the grand Zacconi's place in the part of Lucio, a rôle created by Zacconi, so had more than his own reputation to live up to.

They were at the famous scene of the first act ; Rasi had given the cue, when the Duse rose and walked away, announcing wearily :

"Second act."

"And the rest?" Rasi ventured to ask.

"What rest?" she looked at him in surprise.

"Your part with me. Aren't you going to do that?"

"No!" She smiled indifferently.

"But what do you do at the point where you left off?" He knew there was something special and was visibly worried.

"You will see!"

"But I . . . When?"

"Be quiet, you grumbler!" And without further explanation she left the stage.

That scene was never rehearsed. . . . However, it made no particular difference then as "*La Gioconda*" was not to be given at Berlin, perhaps owing to the morality of the play being contrary to German ideas, or else business was too poor to warrant the trial of an unknown drama; so it was not until later, at Bucharest, that Rasi finally played Lucio.

During the preparations for the performance, much advertised and anxiously awaited, the Duse was continually in a loquacious humour, joking one minute and serious the next, so that it was impossible for Rasi to rehearse the difficult part with her seriously.

Her loquaciousness gave the impression of an overflowing river, which in its turbid course swept all before it. . . . She sang the praises of Byron and Shelley, touched lightly on religion—Christian and Pagan—the mode in stays, and recited lines from Shakespeare. . . . The illness of the Prince, heir-apparent, interested her, as did the death of a famous prince of the city; the customs, gypsies, the poor crops that year; the Latin race, the Oriental; and various discourses on Dante's "*Vita Nuova*."

This period of loquacious incubation which preceded the performance served to increase Rasi's

torment, the fear of not being able to play the part well ever before him. But strangest of all to him was that, when the evening arrived and he was on the stage, a sense of perfect tranquillity entered his being, so that every movement, every word of the glorious actress was as though for him and for him alone.

At the end of the first act, the unrehearsed scene, she had so completely won him by her sweetness, and especially in her expression when she gave him the rose to smell, before Cosimo Dalbo's departure, that in that instant he felt an unexpected lump come into his throat, and found he was breathing with difficulty. Another moment, another whispered word from the magic woman, and tears came to his eyes . . . and unheeded, rolled down his cheeks.

When she turned away from him he suddenly recalled the end of the act that they had never even read together. . . . He had not the slightest idea what she would do or how to reply to her. Mere words would not suffice to bring the act to a triumphant close. . . . They were before a public not familiar with the language, therefore the lines had less importance than the acting. . . . While he was still trembling inside, the curtain fell amidst thundering applause. . . .

Rasi, like the audience, had been swept along on the current of her genius. He had lived through the crucial scene, carried on to the climax transported by her will.

The big scene in the third act was the same. . . . According to Rasi she had never found exactly the proper measure for that climax, but that night she was superb; and until the close he had not been conscious of acting, or having a gaping theatre the other side of the footlights.

After the performance was over, from every box, the orchestra and galleries as well, the entire audience stood—calling, clapping, and waving their handkerchiefs.

. . . Constante Nottara, the star of the National Theatre of Bucharest, where they were playing that evening, literally precipitated himself on to the stage like a madman, crowding compliment after compliment upon the Duse for her art which, as he said, "touched the confines of the brain as well as the soul." He was like a slave standing before her, drinking in rapidly the eloquent, revealing, harmonious words that fell from her lips.

Later he wrote a long letter giving in detail his opinion of her, which ended : "In brief—the Duse is the grandest event of dramatic art in this century."

Elizabeth's private secretary went to the Duse after the performance to present the Queen of Rumania's salutations to the Queen of Art, and to offer her expression of deepest regret at not being able, owing to her son's illness, to join her enthusiasm to that of her populace. That same evening the badge of merit was conferred upon her by the Minister of War.

The demonstration over in the theatre, the crowds gathered about the stage entrance, lining both sides of the street from the door to her carriage. In silence they awaited her coming—silence had been enforced so as to take her by surprise. They even resorted to stratagem, surrounding her with Court dignitaries who distracted her and slowly conducted her to the vestibule. As soon as she came in sight a long frantic yell broke from the multitude ; they picked her up bodily, carrying her high in triumph to the carriage. . . . The horses had been unhitched, and with continued yells of youthful enthusiasm her carriage was drawn by college students across the public square, through the streets to her hotel, where Ministers of State and the highest nobility were waiting to receive her.

The stupefaction, incomprehension, on the Duse's face during all this hilarious excitement was something long remembered by the vast crowds.

"What are they doing to me? What in the world has happened? Where are they taking me?" she seemed to be saying, though no word passed her lips.

A new applause broke forth uproariously when they reached the hotel, continued while she remained in the hall trying, almost mutely, to express her thanks, and accompanied her up the stairs, lasting until she had disappeared into her room . . . solemnly closing the unforgettable evening of glory for Italian Art.

At Budapesth the crops had been good, the heir-apparent was in perfect health and no illustrious person had died; so there was nothing to keep the populace from going to the theatre, nothing to dampen their enthusiasm, or to stop them from showering attention upon the glorious actress, the genius of Art. The success there was inexpressible.

After a performance of "Cleopatra" the Duse was called twenty times before the curtain. That evening she was in a happy loquacious mood, but restrained herself with sufficient sobriety, and acknowledged with poetical beauty the homages of the Danube public. During a curtain call she mentioned to Rasi that she was suffering from toothache.

"It's a pain that weakens one!" she said to Rasi as the curtain fell for the twentieth time. "Think of being eaten by vermin before dying! Ugh! Because you know decay is nothing more than a worm that eats us alive!" Then she burst into one of those rare peals of childish laughter, the sweetness of which made her the most seductive creature in the world; and, as though someone were after her, slipped away to her dressing-room.

While touring she experimented with such plays as "Gloria" by Gabriele d'Annunzio, "I Cenci"

by Shelley, "Macbeth," "Princess George," Alexandre Dumas, and several others less known. They were badly put on, and were all more or less failures.

Not always did she excite sympathy or receive enthusiastic ovations. In Breslau she appeared only once, and for the public that was once too often. The play she gave there was "Cleopatra." She was suffering from the Budapesth toothache, and thought more of the pain—or perhaps the worm that was eating her alive—than the play. . . . Lost in self pity she forgot the "bullet heads" waiting for the supreme moment, which that evening never came. The theatre was packed, and at the end of the performance the audience slowly, sadly, silently filed out, wondering why they had spent their good money to hear so pitifully poor an actress.

Returning from Munich, after just having left her daughter, of whom she rarely spoke, with a proud tenderness she said to an intimate friend :

"Henrietta—my little Henrietta—is so intelligent ! You should hear how she holds her own regarding the most serious questions. And yet, you know," she smiled wistfully, "she is quite green."

"Ah?" the friend replied. Then timidly, "Do you think Henrietta will become an actress?"

"Ah! no, no! Not while I live! I believe, of course, that we all have a right to choose our lives, but goodness! what use is all the education I have given her if it doesn't keep her from the stage?"

While perfectly realising her own sacred mission, and the necessity of continuing until the end, Eleonora Duse had no intention of permitting her daughter to pass through the suffering and disillusion that she had known.

Yet she was always content to receive in her

company actresses who came, as she said, from the outside, who were not born on the stage, for they brought a new current of life into the too narrow, closed surroundings of the theatre.

"This element, which has a superior education, an entirely different point of view and habits of living, mixes itself with the true stage element and is altogether a step towards theatrical regeneration."

She willingly accepted promising subjects in her company, but she never advised any man or woman to go on the stage; in fact, she was against acting as a profession, and whenever any woman asked her advice on the subject she painted the life as black as possible; then, if they insisted upon trying their ability, she gave them a chance if she had a place for them.

Without pity, as she often expressed it, she was condemned to drag forever the infernal chains: in other words, to die night after night on the stage, either consumptive, poisoned or shot—for the good of her country and in the name of Art.

And so it seemed, for in nine out of ten plays given by the Duse the drama ended with her death; and yet, strange as Fate is, in the last play she gave she did not die before the final curtain.

At the termination of the season 1899-1900 Eleonora Duse leased the Villa Porziuncola at Settignano, Florence, a mere peasant's cottage, lost to public view, high on the hills overlooking the quaint old city of Florence. Aided by Gabriele d'Annunzio's wonderfully artistic sense, the cottage was eventually transformed into a most exquisite ancient villa.

As by a magic touch the bare old doors were turned into carved Venetian works of art; the first-floor windows became Venetian stained glass. An

ancient monastery seemed to have been robbed to furnish the square entrance hall and the two adjoining rooms. Her own bedroom was simple, comfortable, and of no period in particular . . . the entire house during her stay there was of a rare artistic simplicity, and suggested, as her daughter wrote :

" This is not the home of an actress, mamma dear : it is the house of a philosopher."

The Porziuncola was Eleonora Duse's first real home, and she remained in possession of it from 1900 to 1911, when the owner (according to his statement in May, 1924) was obliged to ask her to give it up as he needed it for his own use.

As the mural decoration, the famous door, and the stained-glass windows and much of the beautiful furniture is still there, Professor F. V. Ratti is now trying to arrange with the owner and the Hon. Gentile, Minister of Public Instruction, to have one room in the villa kept up by the Italian Government in memory of her.

Across the narrow street, a mere country road honoured by the name of Via dei Capponcina, is the Villa Capponcina, which was d'Annunzio's home, and it was he who discovered the Porziuncola and persuaded Eleonora Duse to lease it, so as to make her home near his.

Need one speak of their life there on the hills of Settignano ? Can the reader not imagine what it must have been ? Those two villas surrounded by the beauties of Nature ; two villas far from the madding crowd, lost in the silence and solitude. . . . Two great souls bound by the bonds of intellectual desires. . . . Two human beings who had already lived in the fullest meaning of the word, who had drunk the cup of joy to the dregs—and from those very dregs had found a new inspiration, and a joy greater than any in the past had been.



“LA PORZIUNCOLA.”
The First Home.



VILLA CAPPONCINA.
Where d'Annunzio wrote “Francesca di Rimini.”

The flowers in the little garden that surrounds three sides of the Porziuncola were all planted by her ; her favourite white roses, climbing red ones, run up the sunny side of the house and cover the high walls that enclose the villa. In the centre of the wall, facing the main entrance, there is a plain wooden gate opening on to the Via dei Capponcina, and through that gate she passed to go to d'Annunzio's larger and more pretentious villa.

Her power on the stage either when speaking or silent was more than human : she reawakened a sense of occult pain in hearts long untouched, stirred them to renewed secret hopes, and by her words brought the dead past to a living present. In her suffering one recognised the suffering of all humanity—as though the soul which she revealed was the world's soul. . . .

And that strange stage power she possessed even to a greater degree in private life. . . . In Gabriele d'Annunzio she awakened hopes of a past that had never existed, tormented him with new ambitions, roused to the full his sleeping genius. . . . There at the Capponcina he wrote the most vital of all his plays, and the novel that attracted the greatest attention, and, undoubtedly owing to the subject, had the greatest sale.

In the little ground-floor room, the wide, low windows overlooking the entire city of Florence, with Eleonora Duse always within calling distance, " Francesca di Rimini " came to life.

The grandness of Eleonora Duse's character and the sincerity of her love and ambition for him were demonstrated to the world when, against her wish, d'Annunzio's novel, " Il Fuoco " (The Fire), was published. . . . It is said she appealed to his chivalry, his love for her, his honour—to no avail. His need of money at that time was stronger than any sentiment, and on March 5th, 1900, in Milan, the book appeared.

In " *Il Fuoco* " he pictures her as an old woman who still retains the irresistible charm of youth.

The story is of course beautifully told, as only he could tell it ; there are passages that illustrate his descriptive ability better than in any of his works. . . . What he gained by it in literary fame he lost a thousandfold in social prestige—for the story was too evident, too blatant, too unmanly.

What may have passed between the man and woman regarding the book nobody ever knew, for she was too noble, too superior ever to refer to the subject ; perhaps too ashamed to let even her friends see the depth of the wound it had caused. And her intimates respected her silence enough not to interrogate her.

She, like all Italians, considered it a great literary work, that much is known, and perhaps the knowledge that she had inspired it was a sufficient satisfaction to pass over the hurt caused by his vulgarity in exploiting their intimate relations which she with her wonderful reticence had sought to keep secret.

Whatever she may have thought or felt, or even suffered, there was no immediate outward change in the close rapport that existed between them ; for it was after the appearance of the book that she took possession of the *Porziuncola*—thus proving to the curious public that even their knowledge of her secret could not change her nor keep her from the fulfilment of her mission.

To return to 1898. While resting in Florence she was asked to take part in a farewell performance for Reichemberg, an actress of the *Comédie Française*. She accepted with enthusiasm, and refused even her expenses for the trip being paid. . . . Thanks to the Duse's presence the receipts of the evening amounted to over 44,000 francs. At the end of the spectacle—she had given the last act of "*Lecouvreur*"—Félix

Faure, the President, went on the stage to congratulate her. The Duse thanked him for his compliments and said modestly that she had been afraid.

"Of what?" the President asked.

"To play in a foreign tongue on the stage of the first theatre in the world."

"What!" he exclaimed astonished. "Did you play in Italian? Your art is so full of passion and truth that I never even noticed that you did not speak in French."

The same year at Lisbon, her triumph at the Amelia Theatre was so great that the Viscount San Luiz de Brega, manager of the theatre, decided to place a tablet in the foyer of the theatre in commemoration of her performance. . . . As an exceptional concession the Duse consented to meet the Viscount de Brega, and to assist at the inauguration of the tablet.

During the festivities for the marriage of Princess Isabel to Prince Tomaso, Duke of Genoa, the proverb of Baron di Renzis, "*Un bacio dato non è mai perduto*" (A kiss once given is never lost), was given in the Quirinal Gardens by the Duse, Cesare Rossi, and Luigi Rasi. When the little play was over, before the actors had returned to their dressing-rooms, the Prefetto di Palazzo announced that the Queen wished to compliment the Duse and her companions. Before they had time to make any preparations the souveraine arrived.

The Queen was most affable, but the Duse, probably from nervousness, received the homage with visible embarrassment; to the gentle words she scarcely replied, seemingly unable to find an expression that would recompense Queen Marguerite's kindness.

There was something in her nature that resented patronage, even of Royalty, though she did not have a sentiment against the friendliness of her own gracious Queen.

From the beginning of the d'Annunzio period a subtle change was noted in the Duse's acting. It was neither better nor worse : it was merely different. Some attributed it to the combativeness awakened by the opposition, almost antagonism, demonstrated toward his plays. . . . Whatever it was, the Italians have an everlasting debt towards Eleonora Duse for the progressive change she forced into their theatre.

When the Italian theatre was tottering, losing one by one its characteristics of personality, slowly taking over the current expression of foreign theatrical works or those of a National school of little importance, it was their own great actress who forced the slumbering Latin mentality to awaken to the good that was in their midst. And though it took her several years she finally convinced them that their poet was the world's poet and that it was their duty to respect him, that in turn he might be respected in other countries.

Gabriele d'Annunzio found in the artistic fraternity of Eleonora Duse an affectionate collaboration and the needful understanding of his genius. . . . The Duse divined immediately what others did not succeed in grasping until years later, and even at great personal sacrifice she retained her position.

Vienna, feeling that flowers, applause, the Press did not express their homage sufficiently, and not to be outdone by Paris, invited the Duse to play with their national company at the Burgtheater, the theatre that tradition had made the sanctuary of Austrian dramatic art. Never before had a foreign actress set foot on the stage. . . . Understanding the profound homage, the Duse proudly accepted the invitation. In the touching figure of Silvia Settala, "*La Gioconda*," she revealed her artistic and womanly spirit and, by the

wonder of her acting, paid in turn her homage to the classic temple.

The gross receipts for the evening amounted to 10,000 kronen, a sum never before realised for a single performance at the Burgtheater.

In Petrograd, the theatre sold out, the Czar and other members of the Royal family and Court present, the actors made up and ready to go on, she called the manager to announce calmly that she was not playing that evening.

"What, signora!" he exclaimed, petrified with fear; "the Czar has already arrived. I can't send him away!"

"And why not? At least you won't have to refund his money, for he didn't pay to get in."

"I know, but——"

"No buts!" she put on her hat and went toward the door. "Arrange it the best you can."

"The best I can! My God! there's no best in a case like this—you'll have to go on!"

"I'll have to what?" She looked at the poor man in wrathful surprise. "I'll what?" she repeated.

"*You will have to go on!*" he said each word distinctly, taking his authoritative position firmly. "You can't give way to a caprice when crowned heads are in the theatre."

"And do you think, stupid, that crowned heads are more important to me than others? Every one of us has some sort of a crown!" With an unusually haughty air she opened the door. "I am not in a mood to act to-night, and should not go on even if—God or the devil were in the theatre."

"What shall I do?" He wrung his hands in despair, for, terrible as the position was for him, he knew from past experience that nothing could dissuade her, and that he couldn't put her on the stage by force, nor make her act against her will.

"Tell them anything you please : that I've broken my leg, or—or am dead ! Good night."

Just what *smara* had her that evening no one ever discovered, for the next day it had passed, and the delayed performance was eventually given.

In all her pilgrimages the thought of the far-away Patria, the friends and cities of her dreams, vibrated continually. The mystery of life was incumbent upon her, the spiritual research already leaning toward the dark profundity of another world, while glory and love were still crowning the declining days of youth.

During a tour in Egypt she wrote the following :

"Squatting as I am now one writes with difficulty. Carpets are the only luxury here in this part of the world. . . . At my feet I have this morning's mail from Europe. . . . Europe—what a grand word !

"To-day has been a good day. Slowly turning the pages—so—I have seen it pass. . . . In this part of the world the day ends with the sun—this one has been tranquil, of an Oriental calm. . . . I can't tell you, for I don't truly know, whether I am well or otherwise here. . . . I only know that I seem to feel that this is not the first time I have seen the Orient. . . . Something of myself appears to come back to me when I wander about the streets, bazaars, and curious Arab quarters—and more than all in the vast open air do I feel this impression of a past life, clear, penetrating, conscious. When this comes to me I stop on the street, trying materially to gather together some fragment of something, if only a strain of music.

"Here all that one sees is called Oriental, and Egypt is far, far from Italy, so the geography says. Why, when one has the fortune to be born in Italy, does one ever have the unfortunate idea to leave such a heavenly

country? I have a memory, but I find it a coarse and useless instrument.

"The exiled body is ever a reason for preoccupation. The fatigue of work and travelling is more serious than I thought it was going to be, and frequently keeps me in low spirits. But why worry! I thank you for thinking of my health. I am taking the best care possible of myself, and stay whole days, when not working, flat on my back, just resting—resting.

"I am not working well, nor making as much money as I should, so as a compensation I have taken to re-reading Pascal. There, indeed, was a person who knew much, and was still wise."

One evening at the Scala (1901), hidden away in the back of a box, where even the most curious were not able to recognise her, the Duse, during an entr'acte, was talking of Maria Malibran, the famous singer.

"Ah," the Duse sighed with passionate longing, "the Malibran! She died young, at the very height of her glory! How fortunate *she* was!" Saddened, pale, for a moment her thoughts were on the dead singer; then moving suddenly slightly forward in the box she looked with keen admiration at the vast animated theatre, in her eyes the memory of past triumphs, the assurance of future glory.

"Ah!" she whispered proudly, "what a wonderfully beautiful thing a theatre is! I *want* one of my own!—with the suggestive Gorgona head in the centre of the velarium!"

For a second the woman of the limpid heart and inscrutable soul was lost in her favourite dream, and the Scala, the famous Italian opera house, became her own beloved imaginary theatre at Albano. "Grande Amatrice," Gabriele d'Annunzio had called her, yet how much more worthy of her it would have been to have said "fervid animator."

How often are the humble in heart properly illuminated ?

In the Cascine, on a warm Florentine October morning, the Duse gave a generous sum to a poor woman for a few flowers.

" Bless you, signora ! " the unknown exclaimed, " for the fine day you've given me . . . and bless her also ! " she added, handing her remaining flowers to the friend who accompanied the Duse.

" After all," she said with firm conviction, as the poor woman turned happily away, " those are the blessings that really count."

And Guy de Maupassant's mother, desolate, bereft of her only son, alone in the silence of the rose-covered villa, was sought out by the brilliant actress.

" What can I wish for you, madam," the lonely old woman said. " You are in the height of your glory, nothing more can come to you."

" Peace," Eleonora Duse whispered humbly.

She, who had every glory that life could crown her with, had never in all her triumphant wanderings found peace. . . . Her hands, hands made famous by d'Annunzio, were ever extended in pity towards those who had need of it ; yet when her own time came pity was to be denied her. . . . The consoler of others knew no consolation.

Repose was unknown to her. The torment so much spoken of was the feverish activity and anxiety for renewed and new forms of interior beauty. . . . It was the mad searching, searching, and the inability to find that made her restless and desirous of always moving on.

To say that one knew Eleonora Duse intimately, even though living with her every minute of every hour of every day for a long time, would not mean being intimate, or knowing her. Those who were permitted to observe her closely might say they had lived

intimately with her ; but they could never have arrived at any conclusion other than that she was marvellous, without explaining why, or even understanding.

To say that she was so, and so, would be a presumption ; rather, she seemed so on a certain day, or perhaps she had said such and such a thing. To have seen and heard her in private life, even for a few minutes, was worth more than seeing and hearing her in every performance she ever gave, and yet neither would give a true idea of what the woman was.

She was a modernist, with a universal comprehension. She interpreted life as she had learned it ; a part was studied, not from the written words of the author, but rather from what lay under them—from the psychology of living, from the profound culture that she had acquired.

Bitterness and human suffering had left their indelible mark on her, and had shown her where sweetness could triumph over harshness. Thus prepared and matured she had surmounted the grave danger of excessive culture, a danger that threatens many actresses, and frequently does more harm than ignorance, for it saps the spontaneity, and kills the inspiration.

Many times it seemed to her, and to others, that she had deluded herself with false hopes and therefore was simply waiting. Perhaps she did believe in her ability to raise dramatic art to a higher plane even at that time, for when Gabriele d'Annunzio came to offer the result of his genius she received him with outstretched hands. She lived before the dream of a new art (perhaps I have said this before) ; in her the artist, not the famous actress, needed to give life to something different. The poet instead asked vision and glory of the triumphant one for *his* something new. And the generous artist, ready to sacrifice the actress, accepted the responsibility.

The desire to renovate herself was therefore the keynote that guided Eleonora Duse's heart and mind, impulse and sweetness, satire and lightest jesting, laughter or silence, confidences and interrogations, meditations and readings—all with self-improvement as the ultimate reason for living. . . . Veiled by melancholy, the gayness like the rare glimpse of blue sky between the heavy clouds of winter, she walked ever ahead towards the unknown light : not of vulgar well-being, regally offered and easily worn out, but of the glory that life concedes for a short time to youth ; and often for a longer period as the sun slowly, slowly turns towards the horizon . . . the learning to live having become the compensation for the lost youth.

With her natural talent and psychological qualities, little by little the woman as well as the actress changed. As the inner woman so was the outer ; her glance became of a vague penetrating sweetness, the dazzling smile softened the lines of the face and changed it to an almost unearthly beauty. Her walk was rhythmic, harmonising with every movement of the slight, delicate body. The voice retained its silver, bell-like notes that time and sorrow had ripened to an acute sweetness. The hands so expressively used seemed to be animated by the gift of thought. Every line of hardness had mysteriously faded from the smooth brow, and the soft rebellious hair that was rapidly turning white crowned her with a regal splendour that she had never possessed in her youth.

Therefore it was only natural that this new discovery of herself should have brought a complete change of spirit that necessarily led to discoveries regarding stage presentations, and made her mode of acting and speaking diverse. . . . This time is spoken of as the reflective period of her career, the period when she was consumed by the fever of knowledge, the fear of being unable to express herself worthily. . . . To the

aristocracy of improvement she added the aristocracy of person, the aristocracy of heraldry and intellect . . . which meant knowing only those who could benefit her in one way or another.

And yet in questioning the friends and actors who surrounded her during the most brilliant of her brilliant days, one gets very little nearer the real woman than before.

When asked about her character, one of her later managers said :

“ Eleonora Duse’s character ? It is difficult to delineate, or to close in a definite formula. It was as changeable as her temperament, varied as her art, fixed only on the basis of constant research for the good and beautiful. . . . One could say, without fearing to be inexact, that the Duse was of an eminently individualistic nature, and certainly fully conscious of her grandness. . . . She gathered unto herself all the world’s kindness, for she more than others knew how to live, more than others how to suffer. She was of a decided intolerance, predilection, and force. She adored one colour and abhorred another ; she idolised one flower, and while the idolatry lasted belittled all the others.

“ Her health never resisted much hard work, and a rehearsal that was announced for a certain hour at the last minute frequently had to be postponed ; but at the following rehearsal she never failed to speak of her absence, or find the occasion to say a gentle word, or express a kind thought for her companions in art, or in fact for any of those who worked with or for her.”

Her intimates supported admirably the frequent bursts of anger, and the inequality of her character, after all generally due to a superior cerebral tension ; for her sentiments were elevated, and her heart always in the right place. The anecdotes recounting her

singular moods are legion, though not all of them are authentic.

Anna Vivanti, the Italian novelist, relates a delightful incident of Eleonora Duse when she was playing at the Adelphi Theatre, London. Mme. Vivanti entered the dressing-room where Maria, the most faithful of "dressers," was preparing the Duse for a second act.

"How are you, dear Eleonora?"

Eleonora was quite all right, a bit nervous, and very thirsty.

"Maria, didn't you hear me!" she spoke sharply. "I'm thirsty!"

Maria let a wrap and a diadem fall, and precipitated herself in search of a glass of water.

"I don't want water!" Eleonora said emphatically.

"And what would you like to drink, *Illustrissima*?" Maria asked humbly.

"Did I say I wanted something to drink?" There was withering scorn in her voice. "I said I was thirsty. I want a cucumber."

"A cucumber!" Maria gasped. "For pity's sake!" Then hopefully: "That means—for luck?"

"Yes, precisely—for luck! A cucumber, a melon, a pumpkin! Well, what of it? Why do you stand there like an idiot? Go and get it!"

"For pity's sake!" Maria murmured again, and in nervous haste left the dressing-room.

It was not the season for cucumbers, and moreover Maria did not know how to say cucumber in English.

In a few minutes she returned with a plate on which a luscious bunch of grapes reposed artistically.

The Duse flashed a fiery glance first at the grapes then at Maria.

"I told you a cucumber!" she yelled, and grabbing the unoffending grapes she threw them in the stupefied Maria's face. Then with her most resplendent smile went out of the dressing-room and on to the stage.



AS "CLEOPATRA."



THE DUSE AT 30.



Maria picked up the scattered grapes, and dried her face. "It's fortunate," she said to herself, "that it wasn't a cucumber!"

"But if it had been a cucumber," Madame Vivanti laughed, "she wouldn't have thrown it at you!"

"Who knows!" Maria sighed illogically.

The story ends there, but, in all probability, for at least two days after the burst of temper, Eleonora Duse put herself out to make up in kindness for the moment of unkindness.

The only English plays that the Duse ever gave were "Antony and Cleopatra" and "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray." The latter was one of her greatest successes at Vienna.

During one of her winter tours, ill from the prolonged cold, she had about decided to give up the balance of the engagement in Vienna, and to leave for Italy; but, realising that the Viennese public had been too generous to be treated so brusquely, she changed her decision, and on November 30th, 1899, gave, for the first time in that city, "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray."

This charming Pinero comedy having been a great success both in London and the United States, there is no need to go into the story.

The critics say that the Duse was excellent, spontaneous, improvised as Mrs. Tanqueray. . . . Shortly after her first entrance she went to the table and took up a bunch of grapes, and in the most delicate, aristocratic manner began eating them, taking the skins from her mouth and letting them drop on to the plate with a most delicious movement of the hand; studied, undoubtedly, but intensely natural and admired.

At the end of the scene where she revealed to Tanqueray her jealousy of the step-daughter, her tones

of exaggerated admiration were sublime and in perfect contradiction to his. And when she found fault with her husband because he thought only of Helen, the crescendo of Helens was different from anything ever heard at the "Raimuntheater." The last syllable still on her lips, Helen appeared, and with an exquisite turn of tone she smiled and added, "Why, here she is!" That simple, "Here she is," was her own personal touch, and was undoubtedly the best moment of the act.

For the Duse the second act was a perfect miniature, a real poem of simplicity and finesse—as one gently expressed it: a "Grieg Caprice." . . . But when she was truly prodigious, reaching an unimaginable height, and transporting the entire audience with her in the marvellous ascension, was in the scene with Mrs. Cortelyou. . . . This time it was not the hands, as in the scene with the grapes, but the parasol that one might almost say became the protagonist. With what a delicious finesse and subtle irony did she trace the innumerable lines on the imaginary sand. . . . In her accents, glances, suggestive movements, quick change of colour—one moment flaming with rage, and the next livid with hatred and fear . . . and in all her individual touches she remained scrupulously faithful to the text.

In the scene with her husband she was clearly explosive, and there found again her old open intonation of the rebellious soul. . . . From that she passed to the direct contrast of the third act scene with Helen, where she abandoned herself with ineffable tenderness, broken from time to time by bursts of unexpected insistent jealousy. . . . Later with Captain Ardale she became terrifying in her force; expressing the inner conflict with a stupefying mobility of physiognomy; and in the end, when she finds herself aged before her time, and before the husband who knows

nothing of the tragedy, she softly put her cheek against his, and rested silent while he gently stroked her hair; then with quick resolution she broke away from him, and muttering almost inaudibly, "He knows nothing . . ." she rushed from the stage. . . . From the transfigured face, the low cry of anguish from the broken spirit, and the intonation of the mournful voice, there could not have been any doubt in the public's mind as to the eminence of the tragic end.

When the final curtain fell hundreds of voices, hands and handkerchiefs became as one curious moving sound, calling for the adored actress. Though prostrated by the emotion Eleonora Duse was obliged to present herself ten times before the frantic multitude.

The continual foreign tours, when for months she remained away from Italy, only rumours of her triumphs reaching home, had begun to make the Italians believe that their Duse was being weaned from the Patria, and almost a spirit of resentment greeted her upon her rare appearances in the big cities. They were accusing her of lacking in patriotism, not realising that every time her name appeared on a billboard it was a new glory for Italy, for her foreign triumphs were nothing more than a reflected glory for her own country.

Perhaps with true Italian spirit they were jealous of their own actress. But if she had ceased to care for her own country, for her own public, why did she make her home there? Why, when far away, think continually of the many friends waiting for her return, recall with longing the blue of her Italian sky, the flowers? Why after each triumph so gladly take up her acting in Italy—keep the old familiar actors with her? And why did she not play in French, which she spoke perfectly, and without an accent (I have that statement from M. Edouard Schneider,

the French writer), and could have acted with the best French actors? . . . Instead she always spoke on the stage in Italian.

But was it love of country, or one man there that made her thoughts turn longingly? Was it because she was Eleonora Duse, Italian born, that decided her to settle for the rest of her life near her birthplace, or was it because of other memories? In a woman it is often the man who accounts for her love of a place, and she had never loved other than an Italian.

I wonder how many people have observed that an actress on the stage rarely, if ever, changes colour. She is either pale or flushed as the part demands; and as she enters, she exits. . . . Eleonora Duse was never that way, she was natural, though she knew perfectly how to make up; she had a special abhorrence for all such artifice; even wigs were not used until the whitening of her hair made it necessary.

The changing colour that was so often noticed in every part that she played was therefore the colour produced by the emotion she was living through.

While in Florence last spring, getting together the data for my book, I had occasion to go to Buzzoni, the best and I believe the oldest hairdresser in that city. During the waving séance I was talking to Enif Robert about an incident at the Porziuncola.

"Ah!" Buzzoni exclaimed, "you were playing with the Duse Company?"

"Yes," Mme Robert explained; "I was with her for the last performance at Vienna in 1909, and I was also with her for the last performance at Pittsburg."

Buzzoni was much interested, and, assuming an air of great importance, said:

"I also was on tour with her for two years, many years ago."

"Indeed. As . . . ?" Mme Robert enquired.

"As coiffeur," Buzzoni replied proudly. "I made the wigs, and travelled with her to take care of them."

How interesting ! I liked the idea of having the opinion of a man of his class.

"Yes," he admitted, "and I still have the 'Francesca' and 'Gioconda' wigs. I bought them from her when she stopped acting and was in need of money. I've kept them as a souvenir. It would be like a sacrilege to let any other actress wear them. . . ." There was a husky note in his voice as for a second he leaned forward to inspect the iron in his hand. "I used to go up to the Porziuncola nearly every day when she was there with d'Annunzio," he resumed his story, "and though I went to her room each time, I can't honestly say that I ever saw the inside of the villa, or more particularly her room."

"How was that ?" I asked.

"She had the fantastic, ancient idea that persons of a lower class should never see the place they were being taken to, or know how they got there. . . . I always went up quite early in the morning ; she was never a late riser, and from the brilliant sunlight of the garden entered a tightly-shuttered room, or hall, I never knew which, and, led by a servant through the darkness of the night, I was conducted to the upper room, equally shuttered. The Duse was seated before a table on which a small lamp burned with only sufficient light to illuminate her head. She chatted or remained silent according to her mood, while I arranged the luxuriant hair for the day. And when the work was finished I followed the servant through the darkness, to the downstairs door and the light."

Hm ! I liked the idea, and wanted him to tell me more.

"It was a great honour to dress her hair," Buzzoni willingly continued, "but I was always glad to put

the last touch, and I admit I felt relieved when I was out in the sun again. She was grand and wonderful, and all that, but there was something uncanny about her also."

"Yes? And was she difficult to please?" I ventured to draw him out a tiny bit more.

"I think I made every wig she ever used, and . . . well, she wasn't exactly difficult, for in the matter of hair she knew what she wanted, but . . . she was sometimes trying."

After that he showed us the famous wigs of long, red-gold, gloriously soft hair. They are almost the same length, but the "Francesca" one is a shade darker than the "Gioconda." . . . When we had properly admired them, with something like reverence they were put back in their camphor.

The uncanny part, I said, when we were out of the shop, was nothing more or less than the something divine that the more cultured always found.

The Porziuncola in 1900.

From the narrow road of Settignano the villa is invisible, and until the gate is reached the tiny low house set in the middle of a modest garden would not even be noticed, unless being searched for.

Beside the plain wooden gate the name of the Franciscan dwelling is cut on a stone slab; an unobtrusive bell is beside it—a bell that one could not pull without feeling a certain emotion, as though expecting an unknown happiness, or blessing. Far away, from the inside of the house, a faint conventional echo falls softly on the surrounding stillness . . . and slowly, mysteriously, by unseen hands, the gate is hospitably opened, naturally not suspecting interviewers.

The first thing to greet the visitor is the perfume of many roses, the one great luxury of the strange

home of the still stranger woman : the actress of complicated tastes, now mad with the madness of spending, now simple and primitive. In the centre of the many-coloured garden is the path that leads to the entrance, a few stone steps, then the modest carved door. In the spacious hall the Duse had gathered together reproductions of the masterpieces of Art. Reproductions of Botticelli's works, Mantegna, Verrocchio, Desiderio, and others are to be found scattered about with discernment and exquisite taste throughout the entire house, that in no way resembles anybody else's home.

She had succeeded, without even trying, without affectation, without special ornamentation, in having a place that was rich, but not luxurious, original, but not loud, and unable to give a complete sense of repose the first time visited : for the useless ornaments and usual furniture to be found in almost any woman's house were lacking there.

The stranger had the sensation of having a sphinx before him and an enigma to solve. The sphinx was there in the person of Eleonora Duse, the enigma in her wide, questioning eyes—questioning for those who intruded, but for the welcome guest she was the most adorable of hostesses.

After tea among the roses at the shady side of the villa, where the sun sinking into a bed of tawny clouds was to be watched, she would show the inside of her house, in the act often showing a wee bit of her heart.

Walking with light virile step that gave elegance to the slight body, she would go from one room to the other ; in each room the same two colours predominated : sombre red and dark green.

In the Duse's study there was only one souvenir of her life as an actress : the statuette given to her by the Italians living in Paris after her triumph of 1897. No picture of a living person adorned the walls :

an engraving reproducing the supposed features of Shakespeare, and several other photos—Keats the poet, Shakespeare's house, and an angle of the intercolumniation of San Giovanni Degli Ermeti, at Palermo ; the last, simply framed, was hung on the wall near the window, from which a tall cypress that caresses the house was visible. Books and flowers everywhere, particularly roses in great flat brass urns, or tiny vases in niches made in unexpected places in the walls.

For the formal guest there was a special room, with a divan and many pillows, several small arm-chairs such as might be seen in any house, and a magnificent spinet, such as it would be difficult to find anywhere. In the half-light of early afternoon the gold of the spinet seemed discoloured, and the garlands of delicate roses that encircled it were suggestive of soft caressing hands ; but at sunset the sun entered the high window, and from above the light fell obliquely on the spinet, changing the gold and dead flowers to a bright flame colour.

Against the wall on the far side of the room was the portrait of a very beautiful woman.

"She was a very dear friend," the Duse explained, "and her name was Matilde. She was so generous and good, and yet—she was a creature of intense passion who had the misfortune to be unfaithful to the man she ardently loved ; I say misfortune, because she was in no real way to blame. . . . Because of her hatred and disgust of herself, she confessed all to him : then she committed suicide. . . . I have only her portrait here, for I feel that she is happier alone.

"All these black leather cases contain the letters from one person." Again in the study she pointed to a pile of black leather envelope cases. "And that," she indicated an imposing-looking volume, "is the translation of Shakespeare's 'Antony and Cleopatra,' Boite's manuscript. I have destroyed all the rest."

She remained a moment with half-closed eyes, swallowed several times, then nervously closed the book, and without another word went out and up to the brightly-lighted severely-monastic dressing-room. There she took a frock out of the wardrobe and, raising a sleeve, kissed it.

"I look at it now and then," she explained, "and try to deceive myself with the thought that my wise daughter of twenty-one is still here. She is fresh and vivid as an April morning, and so flexible and glowing in this light frock."

The bedroom, a tiny place, is next to the dressing-room: a low bed covered with green damask, a *prie-Dieu*, and over the bed a plaque of Medusa, resting. The bare walls are white, unpapered. Severe; silent.

Her daughter was right when she called it the house of a philosopher. It was certainly not the home of an actress—it was the home of Eleonora Duse.

There, in that tranquil nest, she knew something like happiness, there also she passed through the most tragic hours of her life, and emerged victorious.

In the little place she called home she dreamed of rest, and perhaps—death . . . but there was a long, long road to travel before the noble olive-crowned head could rest, the heroine leave her unfinished work.

While really ill, the voice hoarse, breathing so difficult as to prevent her giving full sway to her "soul of fire," the Duse went on one night in Vienna in "The Parent's House," and for seventeen days after was unable to leave the hotel.

During her illness, which had been brought on by the cold and bad weather, the members of her company called daily for information regarding her condition; and learned nothing. Her maid and secretary, who were constantly with her, knew as much as the others did: nothing, for no one dared to ask questions.

The super-agitation caused by inactivity, the nervous strain added to physical suffering, had enclosed her in an immutable silence, during which she abhorred talking, or hearing voices. Fortunately for them they understood, were sorry, and left her in peace.

Not so with the Viennese women, who, fascinated by the stories in the papers as to her mode of living, her courage in supporting the trying illness, were moved by a frantic, delirious desire to show their respect and affection for the actress who in health so thrilled them, and sent richest flowers and fruits to her hotel every day; and the Baroness Somaruga, who was also ill with a cold, and a patient of Dr. Froschle, the Duse's physician, had him come to her twice a day until the Duse was cured, in order to have authentic news of the progress of the malady of the beloved actress.

Sada Yacco, the Japanese actress, the only woman to act in Japan at that time (I do not know whether there has ever been another), was put on the stage to please Queen Victoria, and was the only actress ever compared with the Duse. Those who saw her in New York and also in Paris claim that the mobility of her face was similar to the Duse's and that her death scenes were identical; in nothing else, however, did she resemble her.

Switzerland has never been a great theatrical centre, but, notwithstanding that fact, the world's great artists have from time to time played there.

As long ago as 1900, a Zurich critic wrote :

"We have heard two celebrated actresses, two rivals—Eleonora Duse and Sarah Bernhardt—who have played here with only a few days' interval. The Duse is absolutely a grand sorceress; she acts with

such extreme naturalness as to completely eclipse Sarah, who, unfortunately coming after her, appears affected and theatrical.

"The harmony between the word and the physical expression reveals the grand naturalness, and is a harmony that few actresses have ever found."

Going down to Florence from the Porziuncola, where she stayed until late that year, 1901, the Duse, full of "Francesca," went to call on one of her closest friends, to tell her the great news that Gabriele d'Annunzio had completed the second act of the tragedy.

The story ended, she became aware of her friend's pale face, and realised that she was ill. In an instant her whole attitude changed. She sent for a maid, ordered medicines, and deftly rearranged the room.

"You are better now?" she asked sweetly.

The patient was.

She chatted of happy, cheerful subjects until, a few minutes before leaving to return to Settignano, she leaned with infinite tenderness over her friend.

"As soon as you feel well enough, come back to one who cares for you. You have a sure companion in this friend. . . . I understand the right to live, but—you do not know the signification of separation, even the shortest. How many times have I known the horror of solitary remoteness from those who loved me, and whom I loved! Then I have returned—stupefied; we have seen each other again. . . . I have thought to myself, 'He has lived, and I also have been able to live.' And very often with that knowledge the love ends. No one is indispensable in this world!" Then she smiled sadly: "Come back, dear little one, as soon as you can, to her who cares for you."

Whatever was agitating her the friend did not know then, but the perturbation was so deep and sincere that tears came into the eyes of both women.

Preparing for "Francesca di Rimini" was her hour of purest joy. . . . She knew the entire work by heart ; and those who were near her at that time declare that she did not think of the part created for her, but her exaltation was for the finished "Italian" work.

She paid great attention to her "toilettes" at that time, and even wore a few jewels ; for the first reading of "Francesca di Rimini" she put on the famous string of pearls, a present from the Court of Spain (as has already been said). She deluded herself that she was at peace with the world and herself, and by her prodigious dreams she succeeded in deluding her friends as well.

Curious feminine mixture of spirit and matter !

Studying with care the photographic reproductions of Benazzo Gozzolin, of primitive figures of Assisi, Eleonora Duse exclaimed :

"What simplicity ! What repose ! And this face ? And this ? It seems to me that the very soul is trying to smile. And you, St. Francis ? Now that 'Francesca' has been born, you must also give me the theatre at Albano."

"How does St. Francis enter into a thing of that kind ?" she was asked. "Saints never have had the theatre habit."

"He enters just the same." The Duse laughed.

"In that case, so be it !"

But St. Francis must have been otherwise occupied, for he never seemed inclined to interest himself.

"Francesca di Rimini" was being rehearsed at the Pergola Theatre, Florence, in November, 1901. Meeting a friend on the street, the Duse asked her to go to Santa Maria Novella, the loveliest church in Florence, with her.

"If you don't discover what can be my costume for the third act of 'Francesca,' you're no friend of mine."

Though Worth, the greatest of all great Parisian

creators of fashion, was her costumier, she always loved to take him her own ideas, which she had found by delving into the archives of ancient paintings.

The friend was evidently not a friend, for she was unable to discover anything suitable.

In 1896, before her first appearance on the Paris stage, the wife of the Austrian Ambassador took Eleonora Duse to the Worth establishment. When M. Jean Philippe Worth was presented to her he, not being a theatregoer, had no idea who Mme Duse might be, nor was he at all impressed by the pale little middle-aged woman. . . .

For some minutes after their presentation she remained silent, then something amusing was said and she smiled, and a sudden unexpected breath of spring invaded the beautiful salons of the rue de la Paix. She spoke ; her eyes—those marvellous eyes—danced, yet the pale face remained sad.

Before they left, the Countess —— told M. Worth who his new customer was. A few evenings later she opened at the Renaissance ; because of the charm that he had not been able to forget, and also out of curiosity, he went to see her act.

The first part of the programme was d'Annunzio's ill-fated "*Sogno d'un Mattina di Primavera*," the second part "*La Locandiera*." The charm that she had had for him the first day in his salons increased a hundredfold, and he attended every performance that she gave in Paris, becoming against his will the most ardent of her many ardent admirers.

Before the engagement was ended M. Worth had made several costumes for the Duse, and they had become friends ; not as dressmaker and special customer, but as only two cultured and intelligent people could be, attracted by the same sentiment—the love of the beautiful.

Before she left he promised her that if she ever came to Paris again he would help her to present herself so as to please the eye as well as the senses of the most difficult of publics ; a promise which he faithfully kept.

Being a man of profound culture, M. Worth understood some Italian—enough to follow her acting, but not sufficient for him to appreciate the subtlety of her art. . . . After she left Paris he began to study Italian, feeling that, if he knew her language, through a perfect understanding of her art he could more easily find the keynote to the character of the woman.

At the time of her second appearance in Paris she was about forty-five, and looked sixty, and because of that she was nervous and fearful of her success. It was at that time that M. Worth was a real help to her, and their beautiful friendship, which was to last until her death, began.

She knew nothing of the art of make-up, so before every performance he went to her dressing-room, working over her until he succeeded in making her appear from the front as a woman of thirty, which, as he said, "was plenty young enough for the parts she played."

This art which she learned from him was always amusing to her, but she was also proud of it ; though, unfortunately, once away from his influence, little by little she gave it up.

Jean Philippe Worth, who, as the Duse so often said, knew more about dressing a woman than anyone in the world, never attempted to follow the mode in the costumes he made for the great actress ; he merely made the costumes as the completion of the stage picture, bringing out what was best in her figure and at the same time not detracting attention from the play.

In his line he was as great as Eleonora Duse in hers, and as a man he had the rare gift of intuition and

comprehension of human nature. The great actress he admired, the woman he pitied, understood, then loved—loved her with the purest and truest love that man can give to woman. He appreciated her intelligence . . . knew why she suffered . . . He loved her, yet he was her friend.

“The torment that the world knew of and could never account for was wherein her real greatness lay,” he said when talking of the Duse. . . . “You have seen a mother dog after the puppies have been taken from her—the torment and anguish of the poor beast ; no one knows why she is suffering, or how to help her. Some think it’s the heartache of doing without her young that torments her, but it isn’t that—the cause is physical : the milk which nature has given her is drying up because it is no longer needed ; she can’t give away what she has, and she suffers. Eleonora Duse was like that. So great was the supply of the milk of human kindness in her nature that she was unable to give it all away, and she suffered accordingly. The desire to give, give, give was her constant torment.”

At the time of her appearance in Paris they were frequently seen together : she dined at his home, he dined alone with her at her hotel ; he was in her dressing-room each evening that she played, and before long the rumour of an even closer relationship was going about.

What the world said or thought made very little difference to either of them. If they were accused of being lovers, or engaged, was one and the same thing, for they understood each other so perfectly, their union was so absolutely of intellect and soul that gossip could never touch or wound them.

“Do you know,” he said to her, “that people have gone so far as to point me out on the street as Eleonora Duse’s husband ? ”

“Does that worry you ? ”

"No," he answered ; "it's for you."

"I might have a worse husband?"

"Yes and no. I am a home body and could never follow my wife around the world, while you could never give up acting ; so how could we find happiness together ? I don't flatter myself that I could give you physically any more than any other man could—so what can I do for you?"

"You can make me beautiful clothes."

"I can make you beautiful clothes without being your husband—so long as we both live I will make them, and so long as we both live I will be your friend. If we were to marry—who knows? . . ."

"Who knows? . . ." she repeated after him.

And therein lies a secret which she never revealed even to her closest friends : why she who was inconstant in all things remained faithful to her costumier for twenty-five years. Nor did anyone dream of the love she had for the man, the respect ; and in twenty-five years of uninterrupted friendship there was never even a suggestion of the physical between them . . . though when they met they were both in the prime of life—two Latins, two artistic temperaments. . . .

One grey afternoon, late in the autumn, they were standing at the window of her sitting-room at the Hotel Regina, Paris, when she suddenly remembered the need of new costumes.

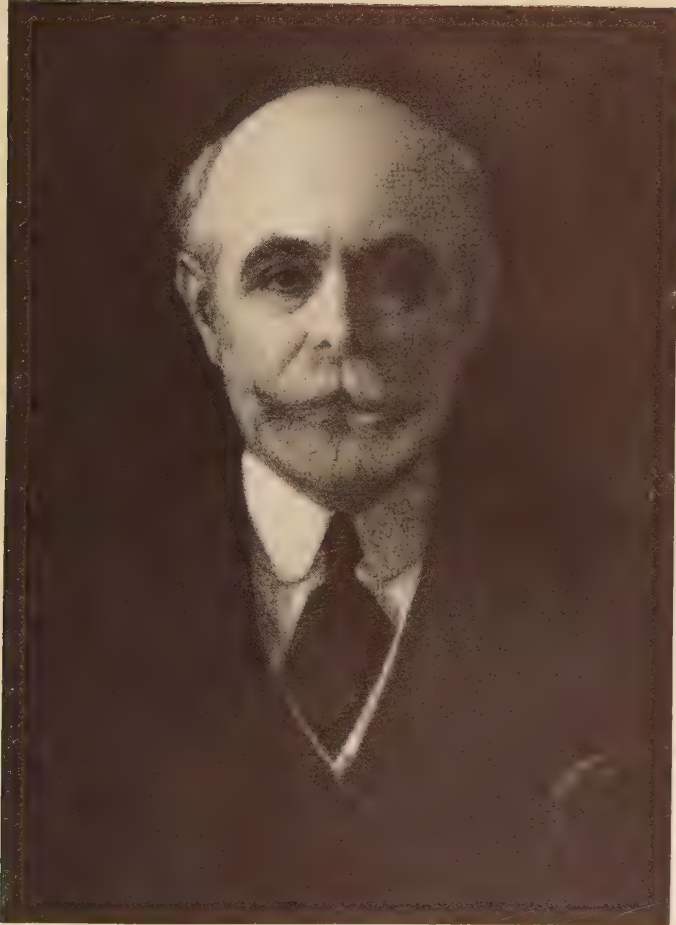
"I want you to make me some costumes for 'Rosmersolm.'"

"Yes ? What are they to be like?"

"Like that,"—she indicated the dull, almost leafless trees in the Tuileries Garden opposite.

"That's rather vague," he laughed ; "but we will see what can be done."

The result was three marvellously beautiful costumes in the dull dead autumn colours.



M. JEAN PHILIPPE WORTH.

At another time, for the "Princess George," she advised him the evening before the performance that, as one of the young women in the company was without a necessary costume for the third act, she was obliged to give her the lovely blue one.

"And you?" he asked.

"Oh, you will make me another one!"

"By to-morrow evening? When will you try it on?"

"I won't."

"There are times when you demand the impossible."

"Nothing is impossible with you." Her radiant smile almost convinced him that she was right in her statement.

A remarkable grey creation, embroidered in rhinestones, reached the theatre in good time. When she came off after the third act he asked how she liked the costume.

"It's all right, isn't it?" She looked critically at the long graceful lines. "I put it on without remembering that it was new, and I haven't yet had time to think about it."

Surely no other actress ever had less vanity. In private life she was never elegant, she was merely refined, following as little as possible the current mode.

A short time before the Duse retired from the stage, knowing of M. Worth's serious illness, and that he was being sent to Austria for a cure in which he had little faith, she came to Paris to see him. Sitting beside the easy chair in which he was propped up by many pillows, she talked only of herself, of her loneliness, of her ill-health. When she was about to leave she told him of her need of him, begged him to get well for her sake, as without his friendship to lean on life would be too empty for her.

"And so," he said, the great love he still bore her shining in his kind, kind eyes, "I owe my life to Eleonora Duse; for I realised then that what she said was true—she did need me; and it was the certain knowledge that I could still be useful to her, that I, perhaps better than anyone, understood her needs, that made me hold on to life, cured me of an incurable illness."

And all of the three months that he was in Austria she telegraphed him twice each day—long, affectionate telegrams, each one helping the cure far more than all the medicine did.

Later he went to Switzerland to see her. And when she opened again in 1921 he went to Turin to give her the courage that she needed for the difficult work of facing a new public.

"She was the grandest actress of my time at least; she was as great as any great lady I have ever known, or remotely come in contact with, and the grandest, most stupendously intelligent woman I have ever had the pleasure of talking with: the most witty, gay, and the most unhappy. . . . Her courage was beyond all comparison. If there are saints in Heaven, she is certainly among them. . . . Her death took the dearest friend I ever had from me, yet recalling her as she was when I saw her last, just before she sailed, I can only say Hosanna! She thought that after the strenuous tour of the United States she would live peacefully at Asolo; that would not have been possible, for there was no peace for her in this world: she was born a nomad, a nomad she had to die."

One evening at the Lessing Theatre, Berlin, the Duse was obliged by the insistence of her manager to give the second act of "Antony and Cleopatra," the last act of "Adrienne Lecouvreur," and, to complete the programme, the last scene from Goethe's, "Edmont."

. . . After the grand scene with the slave in "Cleopatra," into which the Duse put her very soul, she was too weakened in mind and body to be able to put into Adrienne's tragic raving the force that she wished to.

And in the "Edmont" scene she gave the unpleasant impression of not being sure of her lines, which was not true : it was merely that that evening Eleonora Duse was not capable of being other than Cleopatra.

This defect was never looked upon as a defectiveness in the artistic constitution, but rather as a divine quality that gave the Duse the possibility of being the insuperable actress that she was.

The first performance of "Francesca di Rimini" was given in March, 1902, and was, according to the Italian papers, the grandest triumph of her career. For the actress there was only praise : she was superb—all other adjectives failed in expressing the impression she created as Francesca. . . . Francesca was to the middle-aged Duse what Juliette was to the girl, and "Cosa Sia" to the elder woman.

Of the tragedy there was much useless discussion. I say useless, for it was the Duse's favourite rôle, and would have remained in her repertoire whether the public liked it or not.

"Francesca" was given at Vienna, for the first time, on the evening of April 2nd of the same year. The ovation after the final curtain was for the Duse ; the new work received little more than moderate enthusiasm. She insisted, however, and gave it again on the evening of the 4th.

Talking of Ibsen's "Rosmersolm," the Duse said :

"Studying the part of Rebecca West, I had the sensation of searching among the clouds for a lost sun." . . . Which undoubtedly she found—for her

artistic potentiality was capable of penetrating the thickest shadows.

Rebecca West was too incomprehensible a part for the public to appreciate, and, even given by the Duse, "Rosmersolm" had a doubtful and short-lived success.

In Rebecca West Eleonora Duse was searching among the clouds for the sun, while in private life she was the direct contrary: in that she was a giver of sunshine, who created her own clouds and shadows and in them found much needless suffering.

Her susceptibility was so acute as to be almost clairvoyant. Before becoming the exalted spirit that she eventually was, she had the faculty of carrying her pardon, or the desire for it, to a giddy height where it was difficult to follow or understand her.

Never during any phase of her life did she have the ability of overlooking little things; instead she enlarged them, exaggerated, and in nearly every instance it was a question of the treachery of her imagination, and a remedy for that was therefore impossible.

She was continually hurting herself against her will. When aware of her mistakes, or an unkindness to another, she sought in the most humble manner to right the wrong.

For many years she had a humble, faithful maid who adored her, and of whom she was very fond. At Berlin, in a moment of blind rage, she struck the poor defenceless woman, who for several days after was in bed with a fever.

When the Duse heard of Nina's illness, she went to her at once, and, overcome by shame at the thought of her brutal act, threw herself on her knees beside the bed, and with tears in her eyes exclaimed:

"Ask for forgiveness immediately! Tell your lady that you're sorry, very sorry to have struck her."

The Third United States tour was in 1902-3, when she presented the d'Annunzio Theatre exclusively: "La Citta Morta," "La Gioconda," and "Francesca di Rimini."

Through the sublimity of Eleonora Duse's interpretation d'Annunzio's work was admired, became celebrated, and was discussed accordingly. For the Duse there was enthusiasm, exaltation to the point of thorough American exaggeration.

The critic of the *New York Herald* wrote :

"The Duse is the only actress of our time before whom a critic must lay down his arms. Even though she speaks in a language that not more than one person in ten can understand, she is still able to dominate the public by her talent. But how does she manage to completely master her listeners? Magnetism alone is not enough. Other actresses in a lesser degree have the same gift, but are not able to do what she does. She conquers the public by her sincerity; that is her secret—she is a genius."

"If the Duse spoke in Finlandese, instead of Italian," another critic wrote, "she would have made us understand equally well, for she possesses the universal language: that of sentiment, which all the world understands."

Eleonora Duse's first appearance on the London stage was in 1893. She immediately awakened an admiration among the English actors that little by little became nothing less than idolatry. . . . It is a rare thing for the English to mix with foreign actors, and especially those who speak a different language, and are of another mentality; in other words, the Anglo-Saxon does not make friends with the Latin. Instead, in a flash the Duse found herself surrounded

by the affection and respect of all the satellites of the British theatrical world. And the greatest of these was England's own tragedienne, Ellen Terry. . . . As far as I am able to learn, this very real friendship dated from one of Eleonora Duse's earliest visits to London, and lasted until her death ; and of all her actress friends, great and small, no other was more valued, or so respected.

Miss Alice Boughton, the New York photographer, who had the honour of taking Eleonora Duse's last picture, which is a marvel of artistic beauty, knowing of the great friendship between the two famous actresses, made a very special copy of the photograph to present to Ellen Terry. This Miss Boughton has refused to sell, or permit to be reproduced, even in this book, as there are to be only two in existence : Ellen Terry's, and the other in the library of Asolo.

When the competition began between the Duse and the Bernhardt, Bernard Shaw put up a big fight for the Italian tragedienne, and following his advice the English public immediately decided in the Duse's favour.

While travelling in Russia the Duse was suddenly taken ill. Jenny Gross, a noted German actress, became acquainted with her during the railway journey, and kindly helped to take care of her. Arriving at Moscow, the good-hearted actress insisted upon remaining near so as to continue her attentions. . . . Little by little the charm and fascination of the Duse won her so completely that she began talking of a German engagement. At first the Duse paid little attention to the idea, but ultimately she listened. Jenny Gross disinterestedly persuaded Oscar Blumenthal, her manager, to engage the Duse for Berlin. . . . So, owing to the friendship of an actress as famous as herself, the Duse received her first engagement in Berlin.

"No one has ever been able to say exactly what the Duse knew how to do, or to be; for in the same hour, in the same day, she was old and young, beautiful and ugly, bitter and sweet. She possessed the highest, most intense grade of abnegation, of humility, and of sacrifice, and an extraordinary sense of desire to be able to so transform herself. . . . She spoke in Italian? No one was aware of that. Every sensitive person understood her voice, her smile, and her glance, and whoever had suffered saw his pain rise before him on the stage, ennobled, transformed. . . ." This was Berlin's opinion of Eleonora Duse first, last, and always.

Paris put the seal on Eleonora Duse's fame, but there she was not loved as in other countries. . . . Paris respected and admired her but remained faithful to Sarah. But Vienna adored her. . . . The following extract from a letter written by a simple little woman, as she called herself, to a Viennese critic, expresses the love of the Austrian public for the Italian tragedienne.

"Doesn't it seem to you that if the ministers in the churches had the Duse's eyes, her voice with its infinite modulations, her passion and eloquence, that they could reach hearts more easily, as she does from the stage? And that the world would soon become quite another place, and the spirit of the multitudes be kinder?"

"Thanks to her magic all those who hear her have a new sense of well-being. . . . And how strange it is that she exercises this purely moral influence by æsthetic means only."

While playing in "La Citta Morta" the Duse one evening received a letter from an unknown woman, who for weeks after she tried in vain to find. . . . The letter read: "I am a poor woman. Last evening

your voice, just your voice, helped me. When will you return ? ”

The simple words, written on a scrap of cheap paper, had great value for the Duse. She longed to see the woman, to talk to her, to materially help her. And for long the thought that her voice had meant something to some unknown person filled her with a quiet consolation.

Edgar Madalena, author of “The Duse at Vienna,” and who lived for many years in that city, was asked, by a Viennese critic, why the Italians were less appreciative of their unique actress, their marvellous woman, than the Viennese.

“Her fascination is as strong for us as her art,” the critic said ; “and to me it seems that the appreciation of your theatres, and papers, though enthusiastic, unanimous, is not in the slightest degree equal to her merit. Who since Verdi’s death represents the Italian genius to the world better than she ?

“The work of your venerated and glorious poet does not enter into the universal literature. That of a young, romantic poet and dramatist is still too much discussed. He who has discovered something worthy of note in the electric line has met with rigorous opposition in every part of Europe. A linguist seems to have arrived at a superior height, but until his work becomes a patrimony of culture he is nothing outside his own country.

“All these things every nation envies, the way is open to them all it is true. The goal is certainly not far away. But, up to the present hour, who, apart from Eleonora Duse, has touched it ? You have no purer, greater glory. She is the herald of your genius, and you do not hear her voice.”

That was all true. The Italians believed that they adored their Duse, but their enthusiasm for her

went out an hour after the curtain had fallen on the last act of the play. They adored her; but the adoration was too flamelike ever to bring her her heart's one great desire. The prophet was without honour in her own country until the day she died—then she became a goddess, and the Government was ready to pay for her return trip, to escort her to her last resting-place.

She was the herald of their genius, and they did not hear her voice.

For the farewell performance at Vienna in January, 1905, the Duse surprised the public by giving "Adrienne Lecouvreur," for the first time in that city. This was her sixty-seventh appearance there.

The old-fashioned conventional drama, like a bit of real life, she rendered with voice and expression so true that the audience was actually filled with pity for Adrienne's suffering, as though a living tragedy were taking place before their very eyes.

The drama ended, no one moved, no one remembered the long line that would be waiting in the cloak-room. For a second after the curtain fell there was silence, then like a clap of thunder the applause broke forth. They called for her again and again, while, from orchestra and boxes, wreaths and bunches of flowers tied with the Italian colours were thrown to her.

And the Duse, exhausted by the suffering she had lived through, overcome by the intense ovation, humbly, in the midst of glory, saluted the public with gracious bows, and, stooping, picked up the flowers; then with a smile and glance more eloquent than words said simply:

"Arrivederci!"

Voices—hostile, unpleasant voices—began criticising the Duse-d'Annunzio relationship; insinuating

that she was spending her hard-earned money for his extravagances. It was generally known that for the five d'Annunzio plays which she had put on, for the scenery, costumes, etc., she had spent a considerable fortune—a fortune more or less thrown away, for two of the plays, "Sogno di un Mattino," etc., and "Gloria," had been complete failures. The other three, while successful, were not making enough money to repay the Duse, or even to satisfy her as a star, or d'Annunzio as author.

Despite all obstacles she kept on, and by her tenacious will she was forcing the world to accept him and his work, making his name famous.

The story of his prodigious spending continued to spread. He was making frequent visits to Paris not only for business. There were rumours that his financial condition was not as good as it should be. That he was spending was no doubt true, but that she was paying for his extravagances was not true. . . . The Duse knew of the vulgar stories going about but would not deign to deny or have them denied.

She spent her money of her own free will, in the hope of a superior art, and, in her fervour to reach the perfection and harmony of the scene, lost sight of the financial ruin it might eventually bring her,

She was considered representative of the real Italian theatre, and in 1902 her costumes and scenic effects for all of the d'Annunzio plays were equal in richness to those to be seen in any European capital.

She had no manager backing her as an actress in England or the United States would have had ; no funds except her own.

The public continued hostile, and the beloved poet was not always as grateful and devoted as a less arrogant and almighty soul might have been. . . . Clouds began to hover over the villa of rest at Settignano ; hours of doubt and fear were passed in the

quiet study of the Porziuncola. . . . Often the eyes of the woman fighting her fight alone were filled with tears. . . . The profoundness of a virile passion, and the heroic need of moral domination in order to subdue her desires, without respite, worked within her, forcing her to follow her destiny.

And when the garden of the thousand and one roses was in blossom she was again on her way, sadder than the year before, but ever anxious to prove herself worthy of her name, and as she said :

“ Now that the flowers are in bloom I must go away from them, this time to Paris, where I cannot see the beauties of Nature ; I must stay all day in my room in order to have the strength for the evening’s work. What is the thread that holds so inharmonious a thing together ! ”

Francisque Sarcey’s article on the Duse at the Nouveau Theatre expresses the general impression of her at that time and later, as the same article was reprinted in *Comœdia* after her death. I will give it as briefly as possible.

M. Sarcey speaks of her twenty-five years of uninterrupted success, the romance of her life, comparing her to George Sand ; then he gives his own personal impressions :

“ The scene was ugly, the stage fittings poor, ordinary ” (this does not agree with the stories of her extravagance) ; “ the audience for the most part did not know a word of Italian, yet they seemed ravished, passionately captivated. . . . They were subservient to the souveraine seduction of the actress. . . .

“ Of what is this charm composed ? The Duse is not pretty, in the banal conception of the word. Her features are usual, the olive skin devoid of freshness, the nose slightly too large, and the brow high. Certainly

hers is not the beauty of the wax busts in the hairdressers' windows, nor William Bouguereau's virgins, nor the refined Parisians of Chartrau, or Baschet. . . . She does not even pretend to ignore her physical imperfections, so light does she make of them that most people have heard the spirited words attributed to her :

" 'When I appear before a new public, my first success is due to my ugliness.'

" There is coquetry in this statement, for only a woman sure of herself would make a similar admission. . . . Suppose then that the first vision of the tragedienne is not favourable, a second and lasting impression entirely effaces the first. . . . The face, that for some is dull in repose, during the action of the play is transfigured and becomes as the clear mirror where the sentiments and passions are reflected. . . . A singular beauty emanates from her ; not a cold, classic beauty, but a warm, holding beauty, where something indefinable, enigmatic, like in certain of Leonardo da Vinci's figures, is felt. . . .

" But above all it is the Duse's eyes that bewitch you. Her glance is a profound and melancholy poem (except in 'La Locandiera') in the sober plays, even in the light moments her eyes keep their sad veil. Only she laughs. The more pensive the expression, the younger the smile ; the regard is autumn, the smile spring. The result is an infinitely delicious contrast. On the upper part of the face one sees dreams, torment, the fatality of love and death ; on the lips the gladness of living ! The Duse's eyes advise us that the joys of this world are fugitive, and her mouth informs us that a little emotion sweetens human suffering.

" Yes, the more I reflect, the more I believe that the artist's principal charm lies in this antithesis, in the opposition of the laughter and tears that mingle like the sunshine and rain of April showers. . . .

We are touched because the most delicate fibres of our sensibility are stirred, for most of us find ourselves in this conflict between life and dreams. . . . I do not know whether the spectator analyses his feelings with the exactness that I do, but certainly they are the same. . . . There is no doubt that voices do exist the mere timbre of which cause a sort of enchantment ; and there are also faces whose expression alone awakens an irresistible attraction. Eleonora Duse's face is one of those.

"It is to Nature then that she owes her most precious gifts. And Art is added to Nature—on this point I frankly confess my astonishment. When she came to Paris in 1897 I did not have the occasion to approach her. The innumerable pages that I read about her at that time, and since then the souvenirs of Count Primoli, finely and tenderly true, and the more lucid account of Jules Lemaitre, gave me an idea of her talent. In eight years an actress can in some means modify her style, her manner of expression. . . . I had heard everywhere of the Duse's simplicity, her lack of artifice, her disdain for the usual petty tricks of the trade that an artist stoops to in order to render herself pleasing to the public. . . . However, admirable as her acting is, it is not totally exempt from trickery. She is ingenious, and moreover she is Italian. And as everyone knows in all Italians there is the natural mimic.

"And she is a child of the theatre, granddaughter of actors. . . . She went on the stage at four, and has never left it. So heredity aptitude is allied to her professional experience. Every action, every movement, every word is in accord with the scenic necessity, and the stage illusion. There is never a blunder, nor a false note ; occasionally an emphasis in address. In 'Claude's

Wife' and still more so in 'Camille,' it is remarked that she more than willingly faces the house, keeping the partner, who gives the cues, before her, his back to the public; thus diminishing his importance by giving the illusion of his being a mere accessory, or piece of furniture placed there for her use. She subordinates him to herself until he is no longer a living personality, an independent force of the drama.

"One can equally reproach her for over-gesticulating. This fault, if it is a fault, struck me partly because of the impossibility of understanding what is said on the stage. . . . Detached from the text our attention is naturally called to the exterior of the interpreter, her physiognomy, her attitudes, walk, the evolution of her hands—those noble hands, by turn caressing, sensual, chaste, lovingly maternal. Here we consider the Duse much as I suppose one contemplated Debureau, and her gestures take on the same importance as in a pantomime. And that is no doubt why they seem over-exuberant, too multiplied; but at least they are always supremely regulated. This precision, rigorous correspondence between the senses, and the phrases, the tone that accentuates it, the physical movements, and facial expression are the characteristic traits of the Duse.

"Not having received her confidence I do not know what her method of work is. I presume that when she studies a new rôle she establishes it strongly, minutely, keeping it near Nature and at the same time giving extreme care to the truth. She takes it into her spirit, as it were, and becomes a part of it; fixing the silhouette, making the shades like the architect who draws the first plans for his house, or a painter who makes a sketch before beginning the portrait, so as to work on solid, well-prepared ground. Eleonora Duse does not permit instinct alone to guide her, nor

do I believe she improvises, or, if she does, it is very much less than supposed ; to me the surprising reality of her acting is the fruit of attention and patient effort, that having reached justly the point of perfection is no longer visible. . . . This is Voltaire's old formula : The perfection in writing consists in composing easy verses with difficulty ; the Duse reaches the simplicity by using simple means—the hardest thing for an actress to do. She is absolutely sure and most prolific in resources.

“ But wait ! In Eleonora Duse there is something more than the actress, there is the artist as well, which ennobles, and keeps her where the unanimous admiration has placed her. To the science of technique that she has acquired, and which she uses with astonishing mastery, this rare woman joins a force that belongs only to the *élite* : the faculty of living the part at the time that she plays it, to feel the emotions, the passions of the character that she represents, and to forget, if one can say so, herself while impersonating another. The fever of the work invades her, catches her up in a hurricane fury, and carries the audience along with her ; like her you are quivering, panting, unsettled. This all explains the fanaticism that she excites, and the exalted and devoted form of worship that is offered her.

“ It is only impartial to add that this phenomenon is not produced at every performance ; it varies in intensity, and depends upon her disposition, the state of her nerves, an accident, often needless, which agitates her at the moment of going on the stage. On certain evenings Eleonora Duse plays from her heart, on others it is the profession that plays. She forgets herself entirely or she only half forgets. In the latter case she is merely good (she could never be bad), in the former case she is inimitable, incomparable, if not sublime. She is just and never deceives herself.

Sometimes she is radiant : then she has found forgetfulness ; at other times she is furious, and takes the theatre in execration : forgetfulness has not come. Upon what does her perpetual inequality depend . . . ? If you hear her twice in the same rôle, ^{as} she almost never communicates the identical impression. From this proceeds the diverse judgments which implicate her. These continue to be repeated :

“ ‘ She is entirely artificial ! ’

“ ‘ She is entirely spontaneous ! ’

“ In fact, she justifies the two appreciations according to the case, or state, of nerves : now it is the actress who predominates, now the artist. The genius of the Duse is made of the close union of the two—actress and artist—and those two elements together complete each other, and form the perfection, the inspiration, the science.”

He continues with a lengthy comparison of the Duse and the Bernhardt, certainly not to the detriment of the latter, for a Frenchman never would have been guilty of belittling one of his own. Francisque Sarcey was a Frenchman first and a critic second, so ended by comparing the Italian and French school of acting to the detriment of the former. . . . Here I should like to add my personal opinion. As I am neither French nor Italian my opinion is unbiassed. After having lived ten years in Europe and more than half of that time in Italy, where I have seen all of the best actors as I have in Paris, I feel that if there is a point of superiority on either side it is in favour of the Italian school.

Eleonora Duse was never indifferent to what was published about her. Praise was always pleasing, unkind attacks hurt, and defence moved her deeply ; and she never lost an opportunity, directly or indirectly,

to thank those who had defended her. Sometimes her thanks were so timid and veiled that it was a long process of proving facts in order to understand.

The great French master critic wrote :

"She is much more than beautiful. Of a slightly olive opaque pallor, the high brow firm under the thick black hair, serpentine eyebrows, the beautiful eyes of the clement glance, the rather large mouth, heavy in repose but incredibly mobile and plastic (in the true sense of the word). . . . I have never seen an actress who played, one might say, with her face, nor whose physiognomy so changed by eloquent expressions. I believe that it is because of her face that the Duse is so extraordinary an actress. . . . The fundamental expression is sad, but when she unexpectedly shows her teeth, which are indeed beautiful, it is not the banal splendour of white stage teeth surrounded by carmine lips, it is something more complicated, more secret ; the contrast between the vivid whiteness of the teeth, the pale lips, and the tone of the face without make-up is equivalent to the dissonance that in music caresses, a little disturbingly, the excited ear. The voice, clear and fine, is younger than the face. The hands are thin, flexible and soft ; the Duse, with an exquisite gesture, frequently passes them across her brow, or temples. All this gives the idea of a being of extraordinary sensibility, a creature infinitely impressionable, even restless.

"In spite of certain moments in which her own ignorance of artifice risks making her seem artificial, we owe to the Duse a sensation of truth that does not resemble anything that we know ; and has made us discover, retrospectively, the affectation of the animated but vulgar manner of acting of certain of our

actresses, whom sometimes we have praised for their naturalness."

The periods of rest were lengthening, the working seasons becoming shorter and shorter. The always delicate constitution was less and less able to resist the constant strain of travelling, the nerve-force consumed by acting. And the doctors were beginning to insist more and more upon a long, uninterrupted rest.

Shortly after Sarah Bernhardt's memoirs were published in the *Strand Magazine*, a certain part that applied to Eleonora Duse appeared in the leading Italian newspapers.

The grand Sarah, considered by her countrymen as the world's unique actress, had stooped to publicly announcing her jealousy for the famous Italian actress, her rival, whom she hated under her smiling mask. By proclaiming the Duse's inferiority, she loudly proclaimed her own.

"Eleonora Duse," she wrote, "is more a grand actress than an artist; she merely follows in other's footsteps. She does not imitate these others, for she plants flowers where they planted trees, and trees where there were flowers; but, with all her art, she has never created a part that can be identified with her name; she has never created a being or vision that makes one think immediately of her. She has done nothing more than to put on other people's gloves, wrong side out. And all this she has done with infinite graciousness and with careless unconsciousness. . . . Eleonora Duse is a grand actress, even a very, very grand actress, but she is not an artist."

With what fascinating ease this interesting opinion of one great woman for another shows the insidious feline temperament; what a pity that the picture

of the "wrong-side-out gloves" permits one to see also that they had been mended.

How much better it would have been for the world's opinion of her if Sarah Bernhardt had been a tiny bit less a grand artist, and that same tiny bit more a grand woman.

As Eleonora Duse said: "No famous man or woman, and least of all an actress, should ever write their memoirs; or if they did they should wait until the age of earthly jealousy had passed . . . for when the edifice is tottering why call attention to it? That is what memoirs are doing—reminding the public that we are old, asking them to thrill over the story of our past glory, our successes on the stage, and off; opening the book of our private life in order to be pitied or scorned. . . . No, an actress should never write her memoirs, unless she has become grand enough to keep the pettiness to herself, for attacking a rival is documentary evidence of a lack of self-assurance. To speak well of our sisters in art is a proof of grandness, and until we are able to do that we should remain silent." (May, 1923.)

The newspapers all over the world criticised Sarah Bernhardt severely for her judgment of Eleonora Duse; and the Duse herself replied:

"Tell Madame Bernhardt that I am not writing my memoirs, nor have I any intention of writing them; but that she had better pray God that I never change my mind."

And some time later she gave out a statement in direct answer to the Bernhardt's accusation:

"I disdain to be the virtuous person who makes a fuss over her ability; I also disdain to put my personal successes above the play, because the interpreter of a work of art must be merely the faithful attentive collaborator, who forces herself to transmit, without

deforming it, the poet's creation to the public. . . . It has been said that in my new repertoire I have not *created* any new personage. This I consider is my best eulogy."

For years her artistic personality was laid bare to the public ; her private life a tissue of silence. The world had never been able to discover anything scandalous about her. . . . Who loved her or who she loved was unknown, and if it had not been for her insistence upon the public acceptance of his plays, no doubt she would have succeeded in keeping her love for d'Annunzio a secret.

In the silence regarding her private life she was certainly also superior to Sarah Bernhardt—far more a lady.

When it was announced that the great Italian actress would play at the Theatre d'Œuvre, Paris (a theatre that, notwithstanding its noble attempt at art, is second-class), Sarah Bernhardt offered, as in 1897, the hospitality of her own theatre ; perhaps thus hoping to cancel the bad impression that her deplorable judgment of Eleonora Duse's art had given.

Nobly and serenely the Duse replied :

"*Pas d'oubli dans mon cœur.* . . . My first thought while writing you upon my arrival in Paris is one of gratitude. . . . I have never forgotten your hospitality, and I never will. . . . The other time when I was here you did everything to be great and good to me. You accustomed me to a sweet intimacy that for me had become a profound and tender respect.

"Ah ! why, madam, is it that to-day my heart does not find its way to yours. What attitude must a grateful, worthy, attentive soul take ? I cannot ignore the judgment that you expressed for my art—I cannot ignore it, admit it, nor forget it, because we

can none of us forget the most fruitful force which vibrates in us. But—the memory of your judgment of my art must not make me forget your past kindness : for in life every hour has its value . . . and I like to recall in this moment the time when you were perfect and good towards me.

“ So what must I do ?

“ Again I want to repeat, madame, these affectionate words : *Pas d'oubli dans mon cœur*. I conserve the remembrance of one thing, and the memory of another.

“ I beg that you will remember, also, my unlimited admiration and my unending gratitude.

“ ELEONORA DUSE.”

In 1905 she took part in a performance of Gorki's “ The Poor House ” with a French company at the Nouveau Theatre. It was probably the first time that any play had ever been given when the actors spoke in two languages.

The first performance by the French company had not been very successful, but the announcement that Eleonora Duse would appear filled the theatre. Many French actresses, among them Réjane, were in the first tier boxes to greet her. When she made her appearance in the unadorned robe of Vassilissa, the mistress of the Poor House, a warm applause welcomed her. The applause died out almost immediately ; the audience were anxious to hear the harmonious voice reply in Italian to the cues of the other actors in French. . . . Everyone, even those who could not understand the signification of her words, felt the subtle fascination of her voice, and admired the art and naturalness of her gestures. . . . But notwithstanding the best intentions of the public, the complete impression was not entirely satisfactory. . . . The grand actress tried to hide the contrast

between the two languages and to bridge over the distance between the two styles of acting, attenuating the accents and resorting to blending of diction—without the desired result.

As the French part of the audience knew that the Duse spoke their language perfectly, they deplored the fact that she had not consented to play in French. . . . While the Italian spectators received a complicated impression, they were grateful to their actress for having wished to declare her fidelity to the Italian theatre by refusing to act in French. . . . By this fact she clearly belied the stories going about as to her intention of abandoning the Italian stage for the French.

And if she had abandoned the Italian stage . . . ? Would it have been such a terrible thing ? Other actresses have left their own country, have ever acted in a foreign tongue, and have brought only honour to their names and glory to their countries—countries which may not have been able to support them. And instead of eternally travelling, as the poor Duse did, they find a theatre at their disposition which their own country may have denied them, and they are able to live in a certain modest ease. . . . Had Eleonora Duse acted entirely in Paris for the last few years of her career, who knows if she would have been forced to die on the stage ?

A truly dolorous incident in the Duse's life was the misunderstanding between her and Giacinta Pezzana, the grand old actress who, while still young, was great enough to recognise the genius of the Duse, and to sacrifice herself in giving the younger woman a chance.

And when the Duse was being discussed, her art criticised—even though she had passed the pinnacle there were still actresses jealous of her—the Pezzana came forward and openly offered a defence :

"They are still talking about the original and nervous actress," she wrote. "I feel that she is what she is absolutely by her own merit. She is Eleonora Duse, she is unique; and she owes nothing either to Emanuel or to me, for she has never been to school with us, or, in fact, anyone."

When the Duse read the above she was on the point of going to the Pezzana, just as many times the Pezzana had had the idea of seeking "Eleonora of the unforgettable Arab eyes." But the reconciliation did not come about because they were both afraid of not being believed.

And despite the continual efforts of mutual friends, neither woman would move from her stronghold.

Irresistible in her gay moments, frequently poignant, astute in her speech, Eleonora Duse, for the woman quite as much as for the great actress, was much sought after by men in the highest walks of life. She was not a flirt; prince or pauper were the same to her: enough that his character and intelligence made him *simpatico*. But she was not always in the humour even for the dearest friends, as most of them knew to their sorrow.

She was lunching with a friend at an hotel in Florence. A man alone at a near-by table had been watching her intently from the moment she entered the dining-room.

He was fairly young, blond, with a full beard; stiff and haughty, except when his admiring glance was turned on the Duse.

"That man at the next table is Baron Keller!" the friend exclaimed.

"Ah!" the Duse smiled maliciously. "I can't stand him! *Alors je vais me payer sa tête!*"

"No, Eleonora, be good, I beg of you!"

"No use to ask me that; I see you're not gay this morning, so I must give you a good laugh." French, which she adored, she often abused in conversation. "*Oui, je vais me payer sa tête!*"

Resigned, the friend waited to see how the poor Baron was to pay; for when Eleonora Duse wanted to do a thing there was no power on earth that could stop her.

Luncheon over, they left the dining-room, followed by the blond man. . . . Smiling, correct, he advanced towards the Duse.

"I had the honour of making your acquaintance at New York."

"Ah!"—the face was immobile.

"Madame does not remember?"

"No"—still more uninterested.

"I understand"—he was abashed; "I am of too little importance, too simple a man."

"Yes?"

"Naturally you would not——"

"Ah!"

"Recall me."

"Naturally."

"However, you will certainly remember the homage of my Club the evening of——"

"Ah!" the Duse interrupted, exasperated. "D—— it all, of course I don't remember!"

The promised laugh caught the friend as she fled to the door where the hitherto implacable groom was discreetly smiling; and even Baron Keller, after the first mortification, laughed as he stooped to kiss the beautiful hand repentantly offered by the seeress.

Eleonora Duse's firm friends among the great artists of France were Suzanne Desprez and Yvette Guilbert. Both these famous women possess many interesting letters and photographs of the Duse, and

not the least are the three photographs which Yvette Guilbert recently received from Miss Alice Boughton, the American photographer, and to whom she replied :

“ VERY DEAR BOUGHTON

“ Ho ! what a darling thought to have sent to me my Duse !

“ She looks so much what she was when we saw her before her sailing to America, poor great artist ! Her soul, her brain are in those portraits. . . . Thank you !

“ I suppose now it is hot in your New York. In my Paris it is already dreadful. It is good for the evening’s singing at my old Ambassadeurs.

“ Please kiss all my friends. How are they ? And you all, please don’t forget the old

“ YVETTE.”

The Duse was not of a confessional character, but essentially spiritual and religious. In her early life she followed indifferently the creed laid down by her mother—the simple faith of most simple Italians—which hard work gradually diminished in intensity. Towards middle life religious problems began to vex her, and from then on much of her time was given to the study of religious questions.

As her style of acting belonged to no school, so in a certain way one might say the same of her religion ; she possessed a creed entirely her own, a religion that enabled her to approach the Supreme Power without the intervention of a priest. . . . Her creed was the creed of human kindness; not exactly the Golden Rule, something even grander, if that were possible ; not too exacting, but ennobling. . . . It was that, added to her strong will, that made it possible to face life through and to keep on living nobly as she did when, the long dream ended, she awakened to find the day—

the perfect day—had come to an end, and only the afterglow of the sunset was lighting the Porziuncola. . . .

No matter what tragedies were taking place in the woman Duse's life, the actress must still move on, for the public wanted her, loved her.

Shortly after the death of the famous Florentine painter, Gordigani—who unfortunately left his family in straitened circumstances—the Duse took his daughter with her as friend and travelling companion. Not out of pity, but because of the great affection she had for the entire family and especially the father who was gone. A desire to be of material help may have prompted the kind act, but was not the only reason for the delightful relationship which lasted for several years.

During one of her engagements at Vienna, the Duse presented Mendelsohn, the banker, to the Signorina Gordigani, whom he later married.

Herr Mendelsohn had for some time been interested in the Duse's financial affairs, investing money for her, and acting as general adviser. . . . In fact it was through his suggestion that she eventually put practically all of her capital in an indemnity policy, that was to pay her 30,000 lire a year for the balance of her life ; before the War that was an income that would have enabled her to live in Italy in comparative luxury.

In 1906 the Duse gave a performance at Drury Lane for the celebration of Ellen Terry's jubilee ; which, I believe, was her last appearance in London until June, 1923.

No actress except the famous Japanese has ever been compared to Eleonora Duse, nor has she ever been supposed to be like anyone else, though a few very old theatregoers found in her voice and the

magnetism of her gestures something of the great Rachel, the French actress who died in 1858, at the age of thirty-eight. . . . In the life of the two women, as well as their art, there was something strangely similar : Rachel was not a stage child, but she began acting when a mere baby, and at eighteen created a furor in Paris as Camille in *Carneille's* " *Les Horaces*." When a child she followed her father about, a Jewish pedlar, singing and playing the guitar ; and before her death she had played in Russia, England, and the United States—not an easy thing to do with the means of travelling what they were from 1848 to 1858.

The tragic art, the wandering life, the lack of early education, the great foreign triumphs, the delicate health, the marvellous voice—all might have applied to the life of Eleonora Duse who was born the year Rachel died, born to follow her, to equal her. . . . And in the Duse's repertoire there was always one play that had belonged to the famous French tragedienne—" *Adrienne Lecouvreur*."

" *D'Annunzio* has abandoned her," was being repeated on all sides.

Ah ! only a person who had not known Eleonora Duse could believe that that was true. Only a person who had not entered, even for a moment, into the spirituality of the two Florentine villas on the hillside of Settignano, where admirable days of fervid work of the highest creative intellectuality were lived, could ever imagine the relations existing there ; could picture the moments of exaltation, the depths of torment and despair. . . . Eleonora Duse's love for *d'Annunzio* was a consuming passion : she was jealous to the point of depravity—making his life insupportable. . . . She had completely lost the mystic charm that she had had for him ; she had

become too human, too much like other women. . . . And when the mystic veil fell from her, there was nothing left.

Her attraction for him had never been physical. She was old before her time, unhealthy, and not dainty as he wished his mistress to be ; and the world was full of women who offered him what she lacked.

Eleonora Duse knew perfectly wherein she was deficient ; knew how she had inspired him, and that the time of inspiration had passed. She knew that he had never loved her body, and that the madness had lasted only so long as he found a source in her, so long as there was anything in her mentality for him to absorb. . . .

She did not bow to fate and go calmly on her way as a more ordinary woman might have done. She did not give up easily : she fought against her destiny, for years made his life insupportable by her continual, unreasonable jealousy.

She had no real friend among all the women who called themselves her friends, no one to show her wherein she was making mistakes, no one to advise her. Alberto P——, the well-known Italian writer and close friend, says of her : " What woman in all the world was so absolutely alone, so little understood ? "

No, Eleonora Duse was not a victim : if there was a victim in the case it was Gabriele d'Annunzio. (This statement I have from a mutual friend who knew them both well—a very great lady, who wishes to remain unknown.)

For a year and a half d'Annunzio was madly in love with Eleonora Duse of the beautiful hands—he was in love with those strange, mystic, unearthly, divine hands and what they aroused in his poetical imagination ; and the balance of the time he was trying to extricate himself from the mesh they had woven about him. . . . For a year and a half she

had been his only inspiration ; after that she continued to offer moments of intense fervour, which are shown in his work ; but the vital spark had been blown out by the contrary winds about them. . . .

She was not abandoned, for, as I have said before, with her psychic perceptions and supernatural sensibility she had always known, even when she wanted to delude herself, that the day would come when she must take up her march alone.

She had a dual personality in the fullest meaning of the phrase. She was of a superb intellect, capable of doing the most absurd things ; she was grand in thought and action, and she was petty. She was the personification of refinement, and in anger violent almost to the point of vulgarity. Sincere, but changeable as the wind ; stubborn, yet easily influenced ; strong to defend, easy to offend ; a woman of intense desires, passionate friendships, that in a second might change to ardent dislike. Hopelessly extravagant, mean to the point of stinginess with herself, generous to the extreme with those who had her sympathy. . . . A divine, difficult mistress, a tender, loving companion—until someone or something changed her. . . . Adorable, impossible.

It was this knowledge and understanding of her own character that was one of the reasons for the torment that constantly obsessed her. . . . She was what she was, and she longed to be different. . . . She tried with all the power of her strong will to change, to overcome self ; but it was not until later that she really succeeded.

Whatever may be said to the contrary by the many men and women who *claim* to have known her intimately, one thing must be insisted upon : that, despite the "wrong side," the merely human side which seems so much worse in comparison to the "right side," the divine side, Eleonora Duse was too

superior a woman ever to be understood, or appreciated by other than intellects as grand as her own. During her long walk through life it is doubtful if she ever encountered very many.

How many of the people who profited by her generosity ever really loved her, or tried to fill the loneliness of her heart ; ever cared enough to wonder what the other truth might be—the truth that she never told ?

At the Porziuncola, amidst the effluvium of two thousand roses, in the atmosphere between religious and pastoral, among the olive and cypress trees, before her the Tuscan landscape, lovely to the heart and eyes, Eleonora Duse was in her perfect frame. There she was at home, her real self, far from the calumny of the world ; the other side, jealous, capricious, unworthy, was cast aside.

Untiring soul, d'Annunzio had called her in the happy days of the past ; she was mistress of active peace, of working silence. Alone, but not resting : for her there was no repose. Even if she closed her eyes, and the mouth were sealed, all the pulsating soul would have been visible in the magnificent face ; only what was in the alert mind would have remained her secret.

No one in the world ever *knew* Eleonora Duse.

A lady (who has asked me not to mention her name as she is not known professionally) who was intimately acquainted with the Duse for twenty years, more intimately than anyone else, and who was with her and in her confidence during the d'Annunzio period, admits that, after twenty years, she knew her no better than at the end of one year.

Pages of creation had been lived in the two communicating villas that must have had episodes of splendour of the highest human interests. There the most beautiful of d'Annunzio's poetry came to life,

and no matter how he or any other person may deny it, the influence of Eleonora Duse's strong personality is felt in every word. . . .

Camillo Antona-Traversi, the eminent and prolific Italian journalist and a life-long friend of the Duse's, said a short time ago :

" All told, she worked for sixty years, and that's a long time. . . . She lived in the fullness of the word, and in the same fullness suffered, needlessly. She made d'Annunzio as a playwright, and she helped to make several lesser lights. She spent her money to put on his plays, and not one of them was ever a success, or would not have been without her personality to back it. . . . She spent her money as well as her health for an ideal. . . . When d'Annunzio first knew her she was in the prime of life ; when they separated she was old, aged by unhappiness and mental torture that had probably drained too heavily on the always delicate physical constitution, and was most probably the fundamental reason for her retiring when she did. . . . In fifty years even her name will be forgotten, but the poetry that she helped to create may live on. Poor Eleonora ! "

Though the Capponcina had been sold and the two nomads taken to their separate caravans, the Duse still kept the Porziunccla ; perhaps for purely sentimental reasons, for after the separation she spent very little time there. . . . Florence still attracted her, for in 1907 she rented a small apartment on Via dei Della Robbia, No. 54. It was a delightful ground-floor flat, with a tiny flower-filled garden flooded with sunlight. There she passed many months of enforced rest during 1907 and 1908.

One of Eleonora Duse's manias was the renting and furnishing of apartments, always with the exquisite taste for which she was noted.

During a certain time when she was prosperous

she had the Porziuncola, the apartment in Florence, one in Venice, and another in Rome ; and with all these little homes waiting for her coming, she frequently stayed in an hotel. For a reason which only she could ever understand she preferred a badly-furnished room in a modest hotel, generally on the top floor, where there was the view of the city and surrounding country. . . .

Her great love of Nature was demonstrated in her way of living more than in anything else ; and just as the same people would not satisfy all her moods, so it was with Nature : one day she needed the mountains, the next only the sea pleased her, while the day after it would be the open plains that called her.

And in each new scene she found something to gratify her artistic sense, something that for a moment stilled the spirit of unrest—something that convinced her anew of the grandeur of Nature, the insignificance of mankind.

Though the Duse made a great deal of money during her career, she was never rich. When she worked the receipts were fabulous, but she worked relatively little. From 1907 the doctors absolutely forbade her to play two evenings in succession ; and in fact were continually urging her to retire.

For many, many years she had suffered from serious heart trouble, complicated by weak lungs, which made acting doubly difficult. . . . But she was a child of the theatre, and while it was possible to go on she refused to listen to the counsel of the doctors : the famous Augusto Murri, and Pietro Grocco, the most celebrated physicians in Italy.

The tormented heart was undergoing a subtle change. Great waves of kindness were pouring in, gradually washing away the passion and jealousy of youth. . . . The passing of the torrential love had caused the most devastating hours of her life. From

the devastation she arose a creature all sweetness and comprehension.

"Only think of it," she said to a friend while walking at sunset in the little garden of the Via Della Robbia home. "I had to receive —— and his impossible wife. Filthy couple! They talked badly of everybody!—of those I love; of those who are worthy; of others who are good, or nearly good, and are perhaps of the most worth. When they had gone I took a bath. But it did no good. . . . I feel now as though I should like to take my heart out and throw it into a washtub. Can you believe me, they even had something mean to say of Boito, the purest, most forgiving soul that ever lived: the soul that God has certainly already pardoned for the little harm that he has ever done. . . . Boito . . . Boito. He will be glorious, after death. His spirit is like the rainbow." She trembled violently, paused in her walk, tears unheeded running down her cheeks. "'Let he that is without sin cast the first stone,'" she whispered. "If the text were followed," she added, "no stones would be flying about."

She never raised her voice in unkind criticism, yet the world continued to talk of her with curiosity, prying into her private life—insisting upon knowing whom she loved, unable to believe that she had nobly left material love behind her and with head erect was marching on, facing solitude and old age with the same courage that at fourteen she had faced the unpromising future. . . .

Accounts roughly made up by one of her business managers show that the Duse had made, by her triumphal tours in England, Europe, Egypt and the two Americas, without including Italy in the calculation, several millions of lire. . . . But she spent all—or nearly all of it. Not on herself. She had never been

vain or superb in her solitary closed life, never prodigal. She had never had a truly luxurious home—many servants, or horses and carriages, as any other actress would have had. But for the theatre she spent hundreds of thousands of lire, often needlessly, and especially during the d'Annunzio period. . . . Other hundreds of thousands of lire undoubtedly went to pay her actors for the time that they were engaged without working, while she was occupied, perhaps for weeks, and even months, resting, studying, and occasionally rehearsing.

She was always a scrupulous and generous star, even at the cost of great personal sacrifice. Her actors were paid every week, whether they worked or not. And never, even with the excuse of illness, did she break a contract. . . .

It has been, and is still, said that d'Annunzio's extravagance was the cause of Eleonora Duse's ruin, and that his reckless spending of her hard-earned money was what eventually brought about their separation. . . . This vulgar statement must certainly have come from his enemies, for d'Annunzio did not spend the Duse's money. From a friend who acted as his secretary at that time I have the declaration of this fact: his considerable royalties amounted at this time to a small fortune. He never bought her jewellery or made presents of value, but what he spent for the beautifying of the Porziuncola would have been sufficient to live on for a year. Frequently he also helped her to meet the expenses of a broken contract.

For example, she was in Vienna, where he was to join her for a trip to Russia. The company was already at Moscow awaiting her. After receiving a telegram from d'Annunzio announcing his inability to meet her, she telegraphed to her manager in Russia that she would not fulfil her contract; and the same day left for Italy. . . . That caprice alone cost the small sum of fifty thousand lire.



ELEONORA DUSE AT 45.

In September and October, 1908, with a limited Ibsen-d'Annunzio repertoire, she toured, with more than usual triumph, Russia, Germany, Austria, and Belgium. Of Ibsen she gave "The Lady from the Sea" and "Ghosts." Of d'Annunzio, "La Gioconda," which she played more magnificently than ever. . . . The tragic suffering feminine characters created by the great Norwegian playwright appealed strongly to her at that time, especially "Ghosts," as being more suited to her age.

It seems that when the Duse first began giving the work of Ibsen the Norwegians considered her far superior to Sarah Bernhardt, in that her women were Northern women while the Bernhardt's creation of the same women retained something of the Latin temperament.

Tired and ill, from November she rested officially for three months. Her health seemed seriously menaced, and those who knew her feared she would never play again.

Rest ? How could Eleonora Duse rest ? She who was born in a train, and for fifty-two years had travelled continually ; even though the frail tired body begged incessantly for repose, the virile soul refused it.

She spent a few weeks at the Porziuncola, where memories haunted her by day and by night ; peace was not to be found there. In desperation she descended to Florence, to the apartment of Via Della Robbia. There it was too lonely. It was not the season for Venice, and Rome did not appeal to her then. Paris . . . there was always the hope of oblivion there, and many friends to welcome her, if she wanted them.

A few weeks only were spent in the turbulent city, then a precipitated return to Italy. Seeking . . . she was ever seeking peace of mind, afraid to rest lest the rest prove eternal.

The indomitable spirit ever forcing her on, in February, 1909, she accepted a short engagement at Vienna, where, in "La Locandiera," she gave the supposed last performance.

Ill, incapable of further resistance, keeping up entirely on her nerves, she abandoned the stage without clamorous farewells, without banquets, without apotheosis ; timid, austere, and, as always, solitary.

No one in the vast audience or on the stage knew the ache in her heart as she played the joyous *Mirandolina*, knew that she was bidding farewell to the public ; taking what she believed to be her last curtain call. . . . No one had an idea of the tears back of the radiant smile, or the physical force used to keep the pure voice steady.

The final curtain fell on a delirious applause that continued over fifteen minutes ; while huge bunches of violets tied with the Italian colours rained from every part of the house and stage, falling at her feet until she was literally buried under them. Again and again they called for her and still more flowers came. . . . The enthusiastic homage, bitter rather than sweet that night, was more than she could bear. . . . With a sob she turned her tear-stained face once more to the public, extending her hands in an infinitely sad farewell gesture, then gathering up all the flowers that her arms could hold, with a backward glance and unforgettable smile she left the stage, the echo of the applause following her to her dressing-room.

At the height of her glory, owing to the condition of her health as well as the lack of plays adapted to her age, before the first warning of decadence came, she retired.

She was the greatest actress of the world. She was even more than that, for in her eyes there was something that no critic in any country had ever elucidated : the

mediumistic quality—which explains why she was grander than all who had come before her or any who can come after. . . . She had been on the stage over forty years. . . . Glory such as comes to few had been hers.

As she left the theatre that night a sadness, more profound than all the sadness of her life put together, weighed upon her. . . . The habit of forty years had become a thing of the past, without hope of a future. . . .

Alone in her hotel she lay wide-eyed all through the night, the violets perfuming the air about her, the applause still ringing in her ears. . . . Before her there was the emptiness of eternal rest, back of her the closed book. . . .

The following day, just before leaving for Italy, calm as though she were starting on a usual trip, she called the company together to announce her intention of retiring from the stage until such time as she could find plays adapted to her age and mature temperament.

She made no mention of her illness, and with more than usual cordiality she saluted her companions, as she always called the members of her company.

"Ragazzi," the soft voice trembled, "I'm sorry to have to tell you all . . . that for the time being I shall not be able to keep you with me. Because—because . . ."—it was difficult even for her to admit—"I'm old, and there are no plays for old women. . . . So I'm going to do a retiring act, that's all!"

A devoted little actress with wide black eyes looked seriously at the Duse, and with fear and trembling said :

"D'Annunzio, signora, could write a play for you."

With a profoundly kind limpid glance the Duse studied the little actress, who in fear at her own daring was blushing furiously. Then, with a sweet gay smile full of charm and fascination, the soft nervous voice replied :

“ No, no, *per me quello che è rosso è rosso ; non ci si torna sopra* (for me what is red is red ; I do not turn back). *Qualcun'altro forse può scrivere ancora per me . . . ma lui, no !* ” (Someone else perhaps can still write for me . . . but he, no !)

PART III

The Simple Life—Various Performances—The War—Financial Losses—Thought of Returning to the Stage—Plans—The Return—Touring in Italy—Decision to go to England—Vienna—United States.

SAD and lonely, Eleonora Duse left Vienna for Florence, where in the lovely apartment of the Via Della Robbia she passed the first months of rest.

The days seemed long, without any special interest. It was not that the reposing bothered her, for to a certain extent she was used to that—it was the idea of never working again that haunted her waking hours and troubled her sleep.

In the Florence home she had arranged her library composed of hundreds and hundreds of rare books—works of old masters as well as the recent publications in French and Italian, with not a few of the most noted translations. Her chief pleasure then and later was rigorously to follow the trend of contemporary literature.

No longer having the responsibility of a company, or anything particular to do, she passed her days in solitary study; forgetting for the time being the unhappiness and acute suffering the farewell had caused her.

For months before arriving at the fatal decision she had been so intensely nervous that she had been obliged to forbid anyone to be on the stage behind the scene, before, or during a performance.

Preoccupied by the insoluble problem as to how to fill the void that leaving the stage presented, crying

in secret over the cruelty of life, she was continually agitated ; nervous spasms followed any sudden irritation, to be followed in turn by spontaneous humiliation and repentance—the forerunner of the religious aurora.

Ferruccio Benini, the kindest of all kind old actors, who no doubt had never heard of psychic influences, serene in his rights of an old stager, went to greet an actor of the Duse Company.

It was a few minutes before the “curtain.” Walking calmly across the stage he encountered the “Signora” about to inspect the scene before giving the signal for the curtain.

Noticing a man in her way the Duse broke forth angrily :

“Who has dared to come here to disturb me during the hour of my work ? ”

The famous actor of the Venetian Theatre, startled, turned quickly.

Too irate to recognise him, the Duse yelled angrily :

“Who are you ? ”

“*Mi son Benini, poareto ! Che la me scusa* ” (I am Benini—I beg your pardon), he replied sweetly in dialect.

A sudden shame overspread the Duse when she heard the name of a man long beloved, and without a word she went quickly to her dressing-room; closing the door softly. In a moment she opened it, ran across the stage, reached Benini, who was about to go away, and with a quick passionate gesture offered him both her hands, murmuring brokenly :

“Forgive me.”

No other word was said, but Benini went away softly, an unpleasant lump in his throat.

And the Duse, still trembling from emotion, saddened by her involuntary unkindness, had to be asked three times in succession if the curtain could go up before she was able to reply.

It was not because she craved applause, but merely that life without it was suddenly very empty : for Eleonora Duse fêted and petted, numbered among the world's great theatrical stars, was one thing, while Eleonora Duse retired from the public view was quite another ; and many of the so-called friends who had been proud to know her, and to be seen in her company, gradually, even with certain discretion, began dropping out of sight.

Her daughter was married and living in England, and apart from a few cousins with whom she had never been in close rapport the Duse was absolutely alone in the world.

She was ill. From her point of view she was old, and the world unfortunately only had time for youth : therefore there was no place for her. . . . And yet . . . ?

From that question a marvellously pure soul came to life in the frail faded body. . . . In the little home in Florence, surrounded by the great written thoughts of hundreds of men and women from all parts of the world, light came to her who perhaps before had walked in darkness. . . . The way of the Cross lay before her—it had always been before her, but now it was different. . . . And in that radiant light the "Consolatrice" ("Comforter"), as she was known in Italy, was born.

Four months after the disbanding of the Eleonora Duse Company the little unknown actress of the late company became Signora Enif Robert, wife of one of the ex-leading men.

The very day the announcement of the marriage was received the "dear companion" wrote to the little actress, who had always been a favourite with her. The sincerity of her joy over the new-found happiness is plainly shown in the letter :

"I am so glad for you, dear Miss—dear Madam.

"The strength from work and the kindness of life will come to you united and friendly in the strong prop that Fate has now given you.

"I send you every good wish, happy that you have found one who knew how to read what there is of good and sweetness in your heart.

"ELEONORA DUSE."

And only a few days later she wrote again, inviting the newly-wedded couple to call.

In one of the soft clinging white robes that she almost always wore then, she received them in the little rose-filled drawing-room that opened on to the garden.

She was gay, delicious ; interested in all they had to tell her ; laughing with them over the difficulties that their new life presented . . . kind, helping them to make plans for the future. Never for a second did she show any bitterness over her ill-health. . . . Everything about her was harmonious, fresh and pure as the noble brow from which the rebellious white-streaked hair fell back softly.

The doctors had advised rest, but there seemed to be unlimited vitality in the slight harmonious person and the vivid eyes. . . . Her hand-clasp was firm, and in the gentle caress and soft kiss that she gave Enif Robert on parting there was tenderest, almost timid, affection.

She had spoken of a project for a trip to California in September, and in the event of its materialising she promised to have the Roberts accompany her.

The next day she sent the happy bride a wedding present of three magnificent Worth frocks, one of silver cloth trimmed with hundreds of rhinestones which is still in Madame Robert's possession. . . .

Overcome by the marvellous creations, Madame Robert went at once to offer her thanks.

"Oh, signora!" she exclaimed as soon as the Duse received her. "The frocks are beautiful, wonderful, but——"

"Worth," the Duse interrupted, "my grand Worth, the man who knows more about dressing a woman to perfection than any other person in the world, made them all."

"I know, and that's just it: they are too marvellous for me!"

"My dear child, nothing is ever too marvellous for any woman who is young." The fascinating little laugh trembled on her lips, then seeing the sadness in the younger woman's eyes, she added gaily: "Wear them and be happy, and remember sometimes that Eleonora Duse wore them once before you did."

Therein lay their value: not that they were Worth creations but because Eleonora Duse had worn them.

In September the project of a tour in California fell through. The Duse was under a doctor's care for nervous complications as well as pulmonary disorder which for years had been troubling her.

Her unnatural birth, unsettled life, had favoured the hereditary trouble. Florence was not climatically suited to her condition; so in the early autumn she was ordered to the Riviera for the winter. . . . The apartment on the aristocratic, tranquil Via Della Robbia she still kept as her real home, returning there from time to time for several years after.

The Italian and French Rivieras, Paris, London, Rome, the Adriatic coast, the mountains, Switzerland and Austria, all were visited, yet only for short periods; for even when not forced to travel she was unable to remain quietly in any one place

for a long time. Seeking, hoping somewhere, some time, to find peace, she was continually on the move.

In 1911 the desire to emerge once more from the solitude was upon her. At Ravenna, the wanderer, disgusted with the emptiness of life without work, bitter because of her inability to do as the heart dictated, was at the theatre alone, sitting far back in a box hoping that no one would notice her. . . . The old fascination of the theatre took possession of her, and without realising what she was doing she leaned forward from the box the better to contemplate the image of her great love—"a theatre—the theatre." Someone recognised her, and of a sudden the audience as one person turned towards the pale passionate face and unanimously shouted : " Viva Eleonora Duse ! "

Electrified by this unexpected demonstration, as soon after the performance as possible she telegraphed to a manager at Bologna :

" I want to go to work. Get a company together immediately."

The company was organised, rehearsed, and booked. " The Lady from the Sea " and " Gian Gabriele Borkmann " were the only plays given. . . . However, with all her energy and intense desire to be in the limelight, she was only able to give a few performances.

The venture was a losing one for the management, and the company was disbanded.

Her farewell to the stage seemed this time to be definite. She herself was convinced that she would never play again ; but the restless spirit was not yet able to free itself from the marvellous torment. . . . She resisted decisively, disdainfully, the offers that continued to pour in from managers all over the world. . . . Before such offers, before the commercial bargaining, her very soul rebelled enclosing her in a contemplative lethargy where only a luminous spark was able to bring the artistic flame to life again.

Several years of illness, of obscure suffering, useless fugitiveness, when, in the search for something new, different, she was making friends with strange people from almost every walk of life. . . . One woman attached herself so securely that the poor Duse was obliged to call in the help of the law in order to free herself from the companionship of the objectionable young person.

Another close friendship of fairly short duration was that with Isadora Duncan. They met one evening at the theatre in Paris : two women equally great in their own way—what more natural than the existence of an immediate sympathy between them ? . . . From time to time they met for their mutual pleasure, and, in 1913, some months after the tragic death of Isadora Duncan's two children (it will be remembered that they were drowned by a bridge breaking near Paris while their automobile was crossing it), they spent several weeks together at Viareggio, a seaside resort in Italy.

Isadora Duncan had been in Venice seeking consolation, which it seems she did not find. The Duse was at Viareggio. A series of telegraphic letters passed between the two famous women, each asking the other to join her. At length the Duse prevailed, and Isadora Duncan went to Viareggio.

The still glorious dancer was charmed with the delightful place and decided to remain for a long peaceful sojourn. Being constantly in the public eye in an hotel, she felt the desire for a private home.

The Duse, who knew Viareggio well, agreed to find her a suitable palazzino (small house). In a few days she had discovered what she believed to be perfect for the disconsolate Isadora. The arrangements were accordingly made and Isadora taken to see her palazzino.

The location was ideal, and it was neither too large nor too small. The Duse was enthusiastic over

it, the Duncan a little less so as she went curiously through the various rooms.

"I thought you told me, Eleonora, that it was ready to live in?" They were in the so-called drawing-room.

"It is," the Duse replied promptly.

"Ah! Well, where's the furniture?"

A few half-broken chairs and tables were standing listlessly, dejectedly about as though they had given up all hope of ever being noticed again.

"There is plenty," the Duse hastened to reassure her, "for when you look at the mural decorations you don't need anything more!"

"H'm!" Isadora was not entirely convinced. "I can't sit on the walls!"

"The divan is very comfortable"; the Duse indicated a shaky affair propped up against the far wall. "You can lie there and contemplate the paintings."

"Paintings? H'm! And if I don't always want to lie down, even supposing that that thing will hold me . . . ?"

"Then you will go out and walk. . . . In any case one must learn to adapt oneself to furnished houses; they are sure to lack something. . . . But, dear, you will be most comfortable here."

And Isadora Duncan rented the palazzino, which for some years before had been occupied by a mad German prince, who had amused himself by breaking the furniture and making atrocious charcoal drawings all over the calcimine walls.

Isadora Duncan regaled the Duse with the tragic story of her life, and the Duse in turn did all in her power to comfort the woman who seemed unable to forget for a minute the loss of her two children, beautiful and intelligent. . . . And many, who did not know the comfort she was to the suffering Isadora, criticised her for her intimacy with the famous dancer.

Still grieving over her irreparable loss, Isadora Duncan returned to Paris, and Eleonora Duse went to Florence.

One evening at the Politeama Nazionale Theatre, Florence, the Duse attended a performance of the Company Talli-Gramatica-Calabresi, the most perfect combination of dramatic actors that the past twenty years had seen.

The play was Gorki's "The Poor House," the acting magnificent, and it was one of the greatest successes Virgilio Talli ever had as a manager. . . . For the illustrious actress to praise the valorous companions seemed too little; she felt that she could, that she must, do something more. . . . That something was the interrupting of her rest to radiate the great light of her art among her fellow artists. She wanted to be with them, one of them; and so for a charity performance at Florence she played "Fernande." . . . Later at the Manzoni Theatre, Milan, she played the part of Vasilissa in "The Poor House" with Virgilio Talli, Irma Gramatica, Lyda Borelli, Ruggero Ruggeri, Oreste Calabresi, and Alberto Bionanni, all of whom are now the big actors of Italy—and Ruggero Ruggeri is to-day practically the Zacconi of other days.

From the moment of her appearance on the stage of the Manzoni, the audience, the greater part of which had never heard the Duse, had the impression of finding themselves before a superior kind of person—one of the elect. Her fascination had an immediate and sincere effect. Her voice for many, as I have said, was unknown, and seemed not to be directed to the crowd, but to each individual heart, carrying a message of goodness and sweetness to it.

The ice broken by that memorable evening, the Duse again formed her own company, with which she made a rapid tour of Italy. . . . At the Manzoni

and Lirico Theatres, Milan, she gave Ibsen's "Rosmersolm," and Goldoni's "La Locandiera."

Silence again. . . . More roaming about Europe, seeing here and there old friends, making new ones ; interesting herself in all artistic and social problems ; Her original and decided opinion on all matters much sought after.

She considered that a fundamental change was necessary in the education of Italian men and women. "The fable of love is too ardently believed in, has too important a part to play in the daily life. . . . Love is a habit, and every word and gesture depends upon it. It is not the warm Southern temperament, as Italians like to believe, that is responsible for the rapport between the two sexes, but a mistaken education.

"And so the pariah love," as she called it, "has been created, the love of derelicts and rebels who have never learned to conquer self. And for the same reason there are, and always will be, disillusiones in love, for misguided men and women have only been able to find a poor and ephemeral satisfaction, neither of them dreaming that apart from this sentiment there is given to them the possibility of creating a new faith, a new joy that is nothing more than a higher form of love."

Speaking of the women of the Latin races, especially the Italians, Eleonora Duse said :

"The home as a nest, a refuge, a sanctuary does not exist with us. Our sky consents, even demands, that our life be passed almost entirely in the open air. . . . Certainly if we knew how to enlarge the grandeur of this space it would be without confine ; but unfortunately we narrow our horizon until life has been enclosed within the pettiness of self-constructed walls. . . . We have very little beauty, very little intimacy, and even less friendship in our homes ;

even little religion in the highest and largest sense of the word. . . . The fault is not the man's.

"Our religion, the meditation of eternal things, is understood only from a Catholic point of view; a religion of ceremony, of exaltation, of glory. In order to pray it is necessary to go into a church, one of our magnificent churches. . . . And the works of charity are reserved for those special few who are able to attend to them. . . . It is a rare thing to find a woman who can, and still rarer one who knows how to, look after charity.

"So with us it is not easy for a woman to find a field for her activity, where femininity can triumph; and without triumphs she cannot live, for no one can go through life without dreams, without joy; and the time of resignation to solitude and renunciation has not yet come--so naturally a modern woman, if she is mediocre and beautiful, plunges herself into sin; if she is merely pretty, she becomes embittered against herself and others; transforming into a bigot if she is mystic; reclaiming rights, laws, suffrage if she is a meddler and reasoner.

"Women of other races who have had a broader education, who from childhood have been taught the beauty of honest love, who have grown up used to free intercourse with the opposite sex, are much less subject to disillusion, and make far more generous, lenient wives, and best of all, they learn early the meaning and value of friendship, a thing that rarely, if ever, exists between a man and woman of the Latin race. . . . Our women are insulted if a man doesn't speak of love immediately; while the Anglo-Saxon woman, so I believe, is insulted if he does. . . . We have never learned the secret of self-control, and until we do our women might as well be contented as they are, and not try to extol their virtues under the title of 'femministe.'"

Of all the Italian actresses who had the fortune to be at any time of their career with Eleonora Duse the one most favoured by the grand tragedienne was Emma Gramatica, to-day the ablest, if not the greatest, actress in Italy—though by many Maria Melata is considered as the most promising tragedienne, and, in fact, was well spoken of by the Duse.

The technique of her art, the careful stage direction, even the indomitable will to work, Emma Gramatica owes to the years spent in the Duse Company, where the interest and love of the elder woman for the "little blonde of the great serious blue eyes," was her incentive and comfort.

It seems that many years ago another promising young actress was very intimate with the Gramatica, to some extent a rival, and also favoured by the Duse.

Emma Gramatica, who was in the habit of confiding all her worries, as well as her joys, in the Duse, asking advice on any serious questions, for some time had been distant ; and when forced to be near the great tragedienne averted her eyes.

The Duse, quick to see a change in anyone she loved, had been watching "*la piccola*," as she called the Gramatica, for several days.

"Something is wrong with Emma," the Duse announced to an actor during a pause at a rehearsal. "Do you know what is troubling her ?"

The man had no idea ; so the Duse, seeing that the girl was really trying to avoid her, sent word that she was to come to her dressing-room.

They talked about the weather, the new play that they were reading for the first time ; then, putting her hand under the Gramatica's chin, she tenderly raised the pale little face.

"What is troubling my little one ?" she asked sweetly.

"Nothing." Emma lowered her glance instantly.

"That's not true, for, in the rare moments that I catch your glance, your big beautiful eyes are full of tears. Are you in love, and afraid to tell Eleonora?"

Without looking up Emma shook her head.

"Has someone offended you? If so, tell me, and I'll make it all right at once."

"No! no!" With a low cry Emma dropped to her knees, and, putting her arms passionately about the Duse, said brokenly through repressed sobs:

"I—I love you so, and she—she says that I must pray for you to die, because while you live—we can never be anything!"

Silently the Duse stroked the golden head before her, her face drawn in severe lines.

"And you," at length she spoke softly, "have you been—praying?"

"Ah, no! no!" For the first time in many weeks the blue eyes looked fearlessly into the mystic brown ones. "I want to make my way in the world, to be famous; but never if your life depends upon it!"

"Thank you, dear," the Duse kissed the tear-stained face. "You should have told me at once, instead of eating your heart out needlessly." For a moment she seemed to be looking into space, then bringing her glance back to the anxious face before her she said: "I will probably see you both famous; but your fame will live after I am gone, while hers will die before I do. . . . Now get back to your part, and"—she laughed mischievously—"don't bother to tell her that you are not—praying."

After living for brief periods in hotel apartments the Duse discovered a small flat on the top floor of a modest house on the Via Rupe Tarpea, Rome.

The house, No. 61, was noted for one thing only: a marvellous view of the ruins of the Foro Romano,

the Villa Borghese, Villa Corsini, and on to the splendid horizon.

With a joyous enthusiasm for the superb panorama, the Duse began the transformation of the simple place. Decorators were put to work, and in a remarkably short time the modest unattractive interior had become a delightfully cosy home.

She was past mistress in the art of transforming a house in which she had the intention of living. . . . The owner of the Porziuncola is now in possession of a carved staircase of the Florentine style designed from her imagination, which goes from the entrance hall to the second floor of the villa.

Not more than two weeks after the Duse was installed in the new apartment of Via Rupe Tarpea, sitting one evening on the balcony watching the last rays of the sunset fading from the glorious Roman sky, she became aware of screams coming from the street below, on the far side of the house. Rushing to the window, she peered anxiously out, then in horror fled to her balcony again.

A woman had thrown herself head first from a window of the house opposite. One glance at the mangled body had been more than her sensitive nature could bear, and that same evening she left Rome. . . . The few things that she really needed were sent to Florence, and eventually all the furniture and fittings of the apartment given to the owner of the house.

She never returned to No. 61, Via Rupe Tarpea.

Happy indeed were the many proprietors who had Eleonora Duse for a tenant !

She kept up these numerous temporary residences, where she stayed for only a few days at a time, urged as she always was by the fever to go *somewhere else*, to be on the move, to consume the magnificent inexhaustible energy that even illness could not weaken.

Though the actress remained quiet and silent, the woman was unable to. The actress was eventually to be forgotten—that was the inevitable law of life—but the woman could not forget those who were still struggling and meeting with less success than she had had.

Dramatic art in Italy boasts of a *Cassa di Previdenza* (Fund for Poor Actors), which was started by the great Tommaso Salvini. Eleonora Duse wanted to found a *Casa di Riposo* (a Rest Home) for the actresses who could not afford a serene comfortable place to pass a month's rest.

Her kind altruistic desire met with cold indifference, even severe criticism; and Emma Gramatica went so far as to have a letter published in a leading daily paper, part of which follows :

“ For whom would this house generously offered by Eleonora Duse serve? Certainly not for those who have triumphed, for if they have the desire and time they can procure for themselves all the beautiful things offered. Nor is it useful for the unfortunate, the far away, or those who are lost in the fight against hunger. . . . Some little snob of the stage might dare to enter the kingdom of writers, the hitherto exile of actresses. . . . ”

Other papers took up the question, other actresses voiced their opinions for and against it, and the Duse's beautiful idea of “ a flower and a book ” offered by the Big Sister to the little and obscure labourers of the stage eventually fell through.

Perhaps it was not practical to suggest that the villa which she had leased at Rome, outside the Porta Nomentana, far from the heart of the city, surrounded by cypress trees, filled with roses and books which were to be brought from Florence, and ten

thousand lire, should be put at the disposition of the actresses passing through the capital.

In a few words she had made public the nobility of her project :

“ I want to work to dissipate the shadow that hangs over our actors. We have marvellous energy, frequently unknown because the means of coming in contact with conventional life outside the theatre are lacking. . . . The vagabondage, the poor organisation, the disbanding of force are pitiable things to see. It is necessary for our artists to get out of the circle in which they are confined, and to enter into more complete and vaster surroundings of a modern intellectual life.”

Continuing she gave the particulars of her plans for the betterment morally and physically of her companions in art :

“ The workmen have their ‘ Home.’ Why, then, should our travelling actresses, whose poor pay forces them to live in humble, often unpleasant, quarters, not have theirs also ? Why should they not have the honour and pleasure of resting in a nice house filled with books, fresh air and sunshine, where at least they can have the comfort of a less tormented and worthier life ? ”

Her offer was considered an ideal gift, but scarcely worth the money it would cost to maintain it. If she had thought of founding a home where those who had been ill could pass a month of convalescence . . . But what good was a flower or a book to those who were fighting against hunger ?

Apart from the unpractical side of the idea, could anything have been more exquisitely spiritual, or have shown a more beautiful desire to bring light to those in darkness ? Unfortunately for the world of actors, those who plod along, the mere supers, the darkness has become a habit, and like miners they probably

have very little desire for the light. . . . In acting, as in every walk of life, hundreds fail where only one succeeds. . . . And for the hundreds Eleonora Duse conceived her idea ; but those very hundreds considered it extravagant as her ideas always had been.

The Duse, knowing only too well the comfort that good reading and the sight of a beautiful flower could bring to the feminine soul, offered this exquisite consolation to her less fortunate sisters—but as ever she was misunderstood. . . .

Another dream ! Yes, and she had had so many, each one more beautiful than the other, and each ended as the one before it : in nothingness, forgotten by the world—treasured by her.

During the fervid d'Annunzio days Eleonora Duse had dreamed of the marvellous project of the Teatro d'Albano.

Count Frankenstein had offered the land where the theatre should have been built, at the southern gate of Rome, on the magnificent bank of Lake Albano, near the baths of Diana.

The greatest Roman ladies took up the propaganda with true Italian enthusiasm for a time, with gratifying success. Gabriele d'Annunzio was to be the counsellor for the theatre, and Eleonora Duse the artistic manager.

But even this dream, the realisation of which would have brought inestimable benefits of culture and ideas to the Italian public, was destined to die almost at conception.

Afterwards, the Duse rarely spoke of this project, which, like others, adversity had prevented her, from realizing. . . . But she suffered severely and at length over it. Her solitude would have been of shorter duration and less painful if the intelligent words from her heart could have produced the effect she had imagined.

Another dream was the "Actors' Library," which

was, however, only to be met with indifference from the world, and eventually abandoned.

The honorary committee was to be composed of leading actors and actresses. With noble respectful expressions of regret Emma Gramatica, the actress who to-day in Italy stands more than all the others for courage and will, dared to say to the Grand Teacher of her own art :

"Too long you have lived far from us, a stranger to us ; you have lost your sense and even knowledge of what your life *was*. Your project is a chimera."

And Emma Gramatica's opinion was that of all the others, though few of them had the courage to openly voice their sentiments.

Despite the contrary influence, the Library, on May 27th, 1914, had a brilliant inauguration. The stars, great and small, of the theatrical and literary world were all there. Tea was served and speeches made, and the Duse, happy in the belief that at last one of her dreams had come true, radiated charm and contentment on all who were gathered there.

The inauguration was brilliant, then the inevitable happened : the "arrived" had what they desired to read and study at home. The others had different and more difficult problems to solve, and in their life of hard work and struggle they had no time to seek the spiritual oasis which the "Great One" had dreamed of for them at 14, Via Pietralata, Rome.

She was ever striving to do something new, something to help : fighting against enormous odds ; but it was not always the fault of others if she did not succeed. She was continually vacillating, one minute it was "yes," and the next "no" ; tiring those who did not understand the elevated restlessness and perplexity in the creature of the complicated soul who felt only the necessity to rise to the summit of human comprehension and learning.

Yvette Guilbert, the delicious French actress, the sincere admirer and tender friend of the Duse, the woman who, like the grand tragedienne, saw only the way of improvement, the woman who sang vulgar French songs with infinite refinement, and later became the famous interpreter of "Vielles Chansons de France," was in Florence in 1914, with her gay wit helping to lift the veil of sadness that seemed little by little to be enveloping the Duse.

"Why is Eleonora always so sad?" she asked one day. "She who has the possibility of radiating joy should always be happy."

When the question was repeated to the Duse she smiled strangely, hesitated, then said:

"I am afraid—and I don't know of what."

The kind Guilbert to reassure her friend replied:

"She is right, quite right. *Il faut se préparer!*"

And only a few weeks later war was declared, the world's *via crucis* begun.

Inscrutable, the way of the Almighty! God in His infinite wisdom called her to the applause of another theatre: the War. . . . Few of the elect felt the world's painful tragedy as Eleonora Duse did.

Tormented for years by asthma that had made the daily use of oxygen necessary, she was oppressed all those years of fighting by the cruellest suffering, and sustained only by her ardent love for the Patria.

And how many souls of those fighters were exquisitely consoled by her?

As soon as possible after Italy entered the great fight she transferred her residence to Udine, the city nearest the Front, where she remained almost continually until the terrible retreat of 1917 drove her, with many others, to the safety of a more protected city.

Still suffering and fearful, the wanderer, on a stage

that knew no boundary, consecrated her divine art to aiding the humblest of the humble soldiers.

"In so much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren . . ."

Fire, blood, death, and visions of the Resurrection. All these she—found she the envied Italian woman, seeking peace, giving aid when and where she could, there in the "zone."

She was at the bedside of the wounded, finding sublime words of comfort for the dying ; with her own hands arranging for burial those who had passed on.

One day in Udine, at the Venice Gate, near the artillery quarters, she was seen in the crowd following the funeral of a young aviator. Utterly exhausted, she stepped out of the line and stood aside to let the funeral pass on.

In the pale sad light of the late October afternoon she appeared ghostly, as though thick clouds were enveloping her, with occasional flashes of lightning : the scene, Golgotha.

Passers-by hesitated before the lonely figure, a something apart from the war-infested surroundings—hesitated as to whether they should offer help.

Did she need help then ? Did Eleonora Duse ever have need of help, no matter how delicate the health, feeble the constitution, or alarming the condition ? No, her mission in life was to give—never to receive.

An officer who had recognised her, doubtfully approached from the quarters on the opposite side of the street, and unconsciously followed her example :

There in the public street, she who had never professed any particular religion, reverently made the sign of the Cross. . . . She had not been equal to the long walk to the cemetery, but she had accompanied the soul of the young aviator with her prayer.

Just which of the revealing lights that surrounded her had opened her eyes, no one ever knew ; enough that they had become young, with a new and deeper comprehension than ever before. In the emaciated face there was the unmistakable force over men that God concedes only to those who hope to find their strength in Him.

For many, many needy soldiers she was a material as well as a moral help, giving generously of the little money that she still had, as she did of her failing strength.

Shortly after the opening of the " Actors' Library "—to be exact, several months after the declaration of war between Germany and France, therefore before Italy entered the combat—there were rumours of the Duse's financial embarrassment. The story was exaggerated then, and the cause given entirely erroneous. . . . The truth is that the War caused her ruin, and no person in particular was to blame.

It will be remembered that before retiring from the stage in 1909 the Duse had invested her capital in an indemnity that was to have paid her 30,000 lire a year for the balance of her life ; unfortunately it was with an Austrian banker.

Certainly Mendelsohn was in no way to blame for the decrease in value of the Austrian money, which accordingly decreased her income, while the cost of living was increasing.

Though she had made millions she had never been able to save, for, as she said, she always had holes in her pockets ; and no matter how much money she had she would never have had enough. She was prodigal in providing for the material needs of her less fortunate companions. Her disrespect for money, lack of thought for the morrow, was many times abused by those who sought her bounty.

The War, which reduced many great fortunes,

continued to diminish the Duse's, until she was forced to sell little by little her various valuable possessions. Theatrical costumes, which she had kept for many years in innumerable wardrobes built into the walls for that purpose in the apartment on Via Della Robbia, were among the first things to go.

A short time later she sold the rarest, richest books from her library for 60,000 lire. And all of that sum was spent for the benefit of others : for comforting soldiers and their families.

A soldier on leave seeing her pass mistook her for a member of the Red Cross, one of the women who encumbered the Front (in Italy), in most cases doing more harm than good, and in a tone of disapprobation said :

"There's another of those grand ladies who come up here out of curiosity."

"I have come to help and comfort you," she stopped to reply humbly. "You are going to the trenches?"

"Yes." He looked her full in the face. "And a lot of difference it makes to you, and your kind!"

"But it does make a difference to me, just as it must to someone at home. You have a wife?"

"No," he answered sullenly. "She's dead. I got only my old mother and two babies."

"Where?"

"In Milan."

"Give me the address, and I will go to see them."

"H'm! It's useless! They all say that, to say something, and then when they get back to the city—they forget!" He walked a few steps away.

"Tell me what you will"; the Duse held him more with her dominating glance than with her voice. "Tomorrow I am going to Milan."

Not yet believing her, the soldier gave the name

and address, and without a word of thanks went on his way.

It was not true that she was going to Milan the next day, for she was occupied every minute at Udine, but she kept her word, and that same evening left.

The address he gave her was in a low quarter of the city, and the old mother she found was very poor. To the lonely woman caring so tenderly for the babies she offered words of comfort, as well as a modest sum of money. And the next day she was again at Udine.

The soldier was to leave that evening for the trenches.

With some difficulty she found him, and smilingly presented herself. . . . Incredulous, he listened to her story, and not until she had described the mother, how she was dressed, the children, the house and furniture, and even told him the children's names, would he believe that she had not been telling him a piteous lie.

With tears in his eyes he thanked her.

She bade him farewell, and never saw or heard of him again. A few weeks later the retreat came and he was apparently among the missing. . . . And until the mother received her pension from the Government she modestly aided the little family.

In 1917, as a means of entertaining the soldiers on leave, many of the leading actors who had not been called up volunteered their services for a theatre at Udine, which Eleonora Duse, with her understanding of the soldier's temperament, was against.

"A grotesque thing," she said, in speaking of it. "I had the sensation then of the blind tempest approaching. The soldier was irritated by the incomprehension of the country; he looked with distrust

upon the actors, resenting the presence of any man who was not in uniform and had the pretentious idea of coming there to entertain him. . . . Thus we actors have a curse upon us ; living separated from life, we do not understand the other humanity apart from that which we pretend on the stage. . . . We act while other men live. And because of that there is no real communion between us and the public. Colossal ' gaffes ' are the result."

The " Teatro al Fronte " was one of the greatest that the Italian actors have ever made. Novelli (one of the famous family of actors) recited a monologue at a performance in this theatre, where, at a certain point, he said these unfortunate words : " When you return, knock hard." The phrase was immediately taken up by the audience in a low, vulgar sense : for in those days a soldier home on leave had caught his wife in adultery, and killed her.

At each performance there were unpleasant comments among the soldiers, who naturally formed the greater part of the audience. And more than once, before she was known, Eleonora Duse was called upon to explain her position there.

Many a poor soldier never knew that the sweet voice that was able instantly to still his resentment was the voice of the woman who was to go down in history as the greatest actress of his century ; many dying on narrow hospital cots had never heard of Eleonora Duse ; many whose sufferings had been momentarily alleviated by the gentle loving touch of the cool hands did not know that they were hands famous for their beauty—but every soldier who had ever come in contact with the " pale little signora " knew one thing : the greatness of her love for her country and those who were fighting to defend it.

As I write, I picture her in the place where she has gone, surrounded by the soldiers who were lost



ELEONORA DUSE AT 50.

on the field of honour ; no longer the great actress, but the mother that she always longed to be.

The devastation of the War entered completely into the profound spirituality of the woman, and made even her most secret religion tremble ; for she felt it Christianly, more as a humble sacrifice than a magnificent heroism.

This new spirituality enabled her to understand and explain all the contrary phenomenon of those days : she could not limit herself to take part with either side, for she found the same humanity wherever she turned, and that each in its own way was right.

The papers spoke little of Eleonora Duse at the Front, never mentioned the heroic work she was doing in offering her all for the Patria. . . . The papers never mentioned the sale of her precious library, or the magnificent costumes of every play she had ever given ; nor was there ever a whisper of the many poor families who were aided in the hour of their need by her sacrifices. . . . The Press knew Eleonora Duse as a great actress, the theatre public in every city the same ; what the woman was now that youth had passed no one knew, or cared. . . . The honour of knowing her grand heart, of seeing into the pure soul, was left to the humble, who could never afford to pay to see her on the stage of an elegant theatre.

When the Duse returned to acting, one evening after the performance a man presented himself at the stage entrance, and asked, as one within his rights, to see " La Signora." But with all the insistence that he used he was not able to have the severe rule—her rule—set aside. Repulsed, but not convinced, he left the theatre ; and when half an hour later she came out from the stage door he was still waiting. . . . When he saw her, with a low sob-like cry he came forward,

and dropped on his knees on the cold, wet pavement. Grabbing the saintly hands that were instantly extended to him, he kissed them many times. . . . Her face as she looked at the big man was illuminated by a seraphic light ; the smile (an actor going out at that moment recounted the incident afterwards) was of inexplicable unearthly beauty.

The triumph at the theatre had been wonderful, but the satisfaction it had given her was as nothing compared to what she felt in seeing one of her ex-soldiers again—and, unfortunately, only he heard the sublime words of joy that came to her in that moment.

The man, tempered by the trenches, hardened in the fire and bloodshed of the terrible battles of the Carso, was only one of the many whom the Duse had subjugated by her unfailing goodness : and he would have laid down his life for her.

The above is merely one incident, there are hundreds similar. To have an interview with Eleonora Duse at any stage of her career was almost an impossibility ; even friends were not always admitted to the august presence, but a soldier who had known her, or any member of his family, was ever welcome. She was never too ill to think of a gentle, encouraging word, nor ever so poor that she could not give something to help those truly in need.

Waiting at the station at Udine for the train that was to take her to Florence for a short rest, seated on a bench, a discreet friend beside her, she was lost in contemplation of the tired soldiers passing to and fro.

Of a sudden the sound of near-by applause was heard. Someone was in the middle of the crowd approaching, hidden, but revealed by the enthusiasm.

Startled out of her reverie, almost unconsciously the Duse murmured :

"D'Annunzio."

Instantly pale she got up. Her great eyes, full of shadows, following the crowd.

When all was quiet again she sat down, paler—if that were possible—silent as before.

The financial embarrassment was increasing, for the holes were never mended in her pockets, and she continued to give with undiminished generosity; impossible even then for her to think of her own future when there were so many people in need and want.

The pearls, still her dearest possession, were being offered for sale, and when finally disposed of brought her about half their real value.

At the same time as the story of the unfortunate sale of the pearls became known, the Morgana Film asked her to play the leading rôle in a moving picture adapted from Grazia Deledda's novel, "*Cenere*."

Many times she had refused to play in a silent drama, but that time the insistence of Marchese di Bugnano and Clemente Levi, animated by the thought of offering the great actress the means of earning a large sum of money and at the same time serving themselves by her work and glory, finally convinced her, and she, against her better judgment, accepted the contract.

It proved to be merely another disillusion.

The picture was badly organised, and when finished was more than mediocre; and the Duse immediately opposed the diffusion.

The lawyers' fees were more than she could meet, so eventually things were settled outside the court, and the picture put in circulation with a Duse deformed so completely by bad focussing that she was entirely devoid of the perfect attitudes that on the stage made her the most harmonious of beings.

Wandering, wandering, consoling, comforting ; finding consolation only in her profound faith—a faith illuminated and sure, that was to shine with dazzling splendour until her death : preparing her soul for the eternal conquest.

Once more during the War her love for the companions in art made her raise her voice in counsel, a counsel so strange that in comparison the " Actors' Library " could be considered as a sane proposition.

To limit the luxury that is the ruin of many actresses Eleonora Duse suggested the uniform costume—an unattractive robe that was to be used by all companies.

It was never decided if the material as well as the model was to be the same or even what kind of material was to be used ; nor if the same costume should serve for comedy as well as tragedy.

At first most people believed she was joking, but in that they were sadly mistaken : she was intensely serious.

Thus the queen and faithful maid-servant, the peasant and grand ladies, would offer to the eyes of an audience the insupportable, impossible monotony of the mode in sacks ; that would certainly drive the public from the theatre, instead of inviting them to enter.

This time a monstrous orchid was born in the enchanted garden.

With quite another conception of the necessity of the theatre, in 1908 Yvette Guilbert organised " *Le vestiare du théâtre*," a work of direct purification, putting the generosity of the rich French women to proof, as a means of saving at least a few actresses from ruin : for by having at their disposal the slightly-used frocks of the society women they were able to procure the necessary stage elegance at a low price.

Though the Duse's idea of economy was not æsthetically pleasing, the magnetism exercised by her was so strong that the theatrical world sang a hosanna for the find, and one company even went so far as to apply the system. . . . It is useless to say how quickly they dismissed it.

Evidently Eleonora Duse, far from the theatre—her true element—was mistaken in her ideas of the real needs of the class to which she was born.

Shortly after the War, while Italy was fighting against Socialism, the newer Fascismo not yet organised, her long work at the Front a thing of the past, she began to think again of the moving-picture as a possible means of earning a discreet living, and at the same time giving her an occupation that her frail health could bear.

To Marco Praga the theatre-going world owes a debt of infinite gratitude, for it was he who conducted the Duse's thoughts to a return to the stage, as the most certain way of assuring a comfortable old age for herself and a new glory for Italy.

Those who had the good fortune of seeing her at any time during the two years that she played after her return can only send blessing to Marco Praga for the unforgettable vision of true grandness . . . the music of her voice that must ever ring in their ears.

After peace was declared the Duse returned to Florence, from there taking short trips to Rome, the mountains, or the sea, and at last settling at Asolo, in the delightful villa owned by Miss Katherine Onslow, first cousin to the Earl of Onslow.

In the autumn of 1920 Marco Praga, the friend and devoted admirer, surprised her among her books and

flowers . . . and returning to Milan he gave out the hopeful news of Eleonora Duse's possible return to the stage.

Several months before the visit to Asolo, Praga, who for some years had practically lost sight of the Duse, owing to the War separating them, received a note from her, which simply said :

" Am here for a few days only. I would like to see you. Come."

That same evening he went to her hotel. As he entered her room she extended the beautiful white hands, and without preface said :

" My dear old friend, I must work. I have only enough money to live on for a couple of years. It is necessary for me to ; help me."

What a joy, and what a sorrow, to think of her acting again !

And it was for need, absolute need, that she had sent for him, to ask his advice. And when he spoke of the stage, she hesitated. Yes, it was for need, for her daily bread, but no one must know it. The noble austerity of her soul, the legitimate pride of the woman and actress, would not permit her return to the stage to arouse a sentiment of pity for the woman. Rather the public take it as the vanity of the actress, of a miserable desire for new glory, and the pleasure of hearing her name on the lips of the world. . . . And so she made the statement later that, having regained her health, she felt in form to return, even if only for a short while, and that she desired to work because it seemed to her to be the duty of every loyal Italian to make something of him, or herself, for Italy—the Italy renovated by the War ; to do something, the best that one could, for the pleasure and the elevation of the multitudes still debating between the shock that the devastation left in all hearts and the relief that the final victory had brought.

That was what she said, and hoped the world would believe. And it is not impossible, given her exquisite sensibility and noble soul, that such a thought really was in her mind.

But the years were weighing heavily on her, though she was only a little over sixty, for illness had tormented too much and too long the delicate body ; and her desire also to carry her stone to the edifice of the new Italy might never have been realised if petty and cruel necessity had not impelled her on.

At Asolo, Marco Praga found the grand tragedienne—the dear little white-haired woman—sad, restless, doubtful. She feared her return to the stage. She, the Duse ! When at last Praga convinced her that she was certain of success, and that Italy wanted, needed, to see and hear her again, he left the villa, and slowly began the descent to the Square.

“ Listen,” she called after him : “ write something, publish something. Say that you hunted me out, to try to persuade me to play again, to do a *short* tour. That it was you, urged by the others. . . . And that I have not yet said ‘ yes,’ or ‘ no.’ Do you understand ? I’m afraid ! If they think this weird idea is mine, I should be ashamed. . . . And the reason why—— No, no, no ! You understand me, my friend ? ”

And when Praga’s article appeared in the papers, and it was known that her intention to return to the stage was more than a rumour, many of the faithful actors who had been with her twelve years before wrote to “ their signora ” that they were ready, if she wished to call them to her. . . . Ready to take whatever parts she could offer them.

The Duse had always treated the members of her company as ladies and gentlemen, knowing in a marvellous way how to cancel the distance between

herself and the most humble of them. But woe to he who was guilty of the smallest discord.

The actor, or actress who involuntarily committed a fault wounded the measureless sensibility for harmony that she possessed as no one else ever had . . . and ran the risk of becoming, no matter what his position as actor, a negative quantity.

For those who were near her she was ever wonderful, and at the same time it was exceedingly sorrowful to see how, without a moment's warning, or apparent reason, she would change towards those who in her heart she desired to be kind to. . . . Even those who were not sensitive felt this changeableness and, not understanding why, for days remained perplexed, but never lamenting the fortune that had put them with her, for, in the words of d'Annunzio, which they all knew, there was a vague sense of comprehension :

"She is always different, like a cloud that from second to second seems to change before your very eyes without your seeing the change," etc.

In 1920, before her plan to return to the stage, the Duse, restless, unsettled, suddenly decided to leave Florence and to spend a few weeks in Munich. A telegram was sent to engage rooms, and, accompanied by Mlle. Desirée—the Austrian lady who had been her companion before the War, and as soon as peace was declared with loving devotion returned—left for the Bavarian city.

Keeping her passport in her handbag, the Duse was always ready to start for any country at a moment's notice.

Arriving at Munich they got into a taxi. Before passing the station limits the taxi was stopped by a policeman, whose bullet head was plainly visible under the helmet, and their passports studied inside and out.

The Duse said nothing, but when they arrived at the hotel she refused to have the luggage taken off the taxi.

"Go and pay for the reservation of the rooms," she said to Mlle. Desirée, "and ask what time the first train leaves for Italy."

Quite calmly, undisturbed by the long journey, she sat in the hall while the bill was being paid to the astonished manager; to whom the Desirée could give no explanation other than that Madam had changed her mind—why, even she did not know.

When they were in the train that was to take them to Italy the Duse explained: "Impossible! It's still too soon to support the pig-headed!"

She had travelled about thirty-six hours, spent a considerable sum, only to find that Germany was still Germany, and that Eleonora Duse was as much, or as little, to the authorities, as the smallest personality; and Eleonora Duse was in the habit of being Eleonora Duse.

"You, boys, have known how to fabricate with your own hands, by bloodshed and by laying down your lives, a divine and immortal drama before which one must religiously bow, devout and humble.

"I am taking up my work again for you, for you young people who have heroically lived through the massacre. . . . I am here a bit worn, slightly bent by the weight of years, white-haired and very old. . . . Do you want me just the same? I have great faith in you, in the new generation given us by the War; so strong is that faith that I am able to conserve a little of it for myself. . . . In the past years I have read everything that has been written about the War. . . . I have a little house—a refuge—up here at Asolo. Do you all know the place? I think you do. When I open my window in the morning, before me as in a

frame is the Grappa. . . . I put two little vases of flowers on the window-sill : and my altar is there. And I contemplate, until the desire to light a candle and to pray comes to me.

" I would like to now and always be the mother who teaches how to love life again, who exalts kindness and the beauty of life to the numberless sons, who, too near, and for too long, have been compelled to face death. And to carry to them not a word of doubt, but one of faith !

" ELEONORA DUSE."

This letter was the Duse's open appeal to the Italian public a short time before her return to the stage.

She made her first reappearance with Ermete Zacconi at the Balbo Theatre, Turin, on the evening of May 5th, 1921, in " The Lady from the Sea."

Naturally conscious as she was of the immense souvenir which she had left, she was terrified by the possibility of destroying, in those who had known her in her youth, the poetry of that souvenir, made ideal by the passing of time ; and to those who had not known her, the image diffused by writers and the tales of those who had seen her. . . . So presenting herself on the stage of the Balbo Theatre that memorable evening, she was oppressed by a tremendous anguish, which became deadly, almost paralysing her with fear, when, upon her entrance, the spectators as one person rose and saluted her with a solemn applause that lasted fully ten minutes.

That evening there was no disillusion. She was the Duse, the Duse, the Duse. No one in the crowded theatre searched for adjectives. The Duse. And in those two words everything had been said. What an evening it was ! Never had an audience in Italy been so thrilled . . . and how proud they all were to say afterwards : " I was there."

Among the old actors who returned to the Duse were the two Roberts, who had met in her company twelve years before, and who, during the years of silence had not had the courage to act without their "signora," and so had turned to moving pictures, and even to commerce rather than go to another company.

Some years before, in 1916, Enif Robert had passed through a severe illness, undergoing several dangerous operations, and while she was in the hospital the Duse went to see her many times. By the exercise of her strong will, her mere presence was sufficient to relieve the patient's suffering.

"I'm a little unknown actress, who played the left-over parts," Enif Robert said to me; "but I owe my health if not my life to Eleonora Duse, for the gentle affection and great kindness that she showered upon me during my hours of suffering. . . . When worn out by pain she gave me courage, and taught me that no matter what happened life was still worth while. . . . And in return for that I would have willingly laid down my life, the life that she helped me to find, if by so doing I could have saved her a moment's pain."

And just such love as that she inspired in all who had the honour and the blessed privilege to be near her.

One day during Mme Robert's illness the Duse appeared on the threshold of the little hospital room, a tiny pot of flowers in her hand; standing still she said: "It's just a wee four-leaf clover plant, for good luck." And, smiling, she advanced with her light step to the bedside, the mere sight of her pure sweet face instantly comforting the sick woman there.

The great woman who, by the lightest touch of her hand, the inflection of her voice, or with a harmonious gesture, could alleviate the sufferings of others,

for herself could find no consolation. . . . " He saved others, Himself He could not save." In the last ten years of her life Eleonora Duse walked very close to the Divine Son, bearing nobly her Cross, as in fact she had borne it from birth, fulfilling to the best of her ability the mission for which she was sent into the world.

In this affirmation of truth there is no desire to paint a sad, desolate Duse ; no—for she then, as earlier in her life, knew how to pass over profound suffering, at times, in fact many times, to silence it entirely. . . . She often fabricated a serenity full of gaiety that was a benediction, a sense of well-being for those who were able to share the hours of joy with her. . . . She was always different—beyond analysis, and particularly for anyone who had known her in her prime and saw her again during the latter years.

Many, many times she gave the comfort of her presence to the little actress, and never once during the long illness did her interest wane, for realising the moral importance of her assistance she continued to offer it freely.

One day she sent three books, one of them a translation of Emerson, whose philosophy immediately had the effect she hoped for, giving Enif Robert, without exactly knowing why, a new hope of getting well. The other two books were Italian novels ; a little note accompanied them :

" I send you these three friends ; later I will come. Keep tranquil. God sees and provides."

And the day of the operation :

" Serene acceptance. Calm. Collected. All will be well. *All will be well.*

" ELEONORA DUSE."

And two days after the operation, which had proved most successful :

" I am here with you, as I always am. I will not come into your room for fear of over-exciting you. We will see each other soon.

" ELEONORA DUSE."

In the sick woman she saw only the suffering companion who had need of comfort, and in a moment she had effaced the distance that had hitherto existed between the great artist and the little actress by addressing her in the familiar second person, thus by one word reaching Enif Robert's heart and filling it with gratitude.

So at the announcement of the Duse's return it was with joy and faith that the unimportant little actress wrote to her " signora " and benefactress.

The reply was, " Come," and the Roberts, the two ex-actors, who, alas! were no longer newly-weds, accepted the call.

" The Lady from the Sea " was being rehearsed at Rome. The Duse, as I have already said, had many copies of every play, each lined and underlined, ideas and comments on every scene fully described, in the continual research for the Ibsen truth.

One morning she remembered that she had still another copy of " The Lady " at Asolo, in which, in the serenity of her villa, she had made various important notes. So important, that in the dust of the stage she could not recall them clearly.

It was probably merely a question of a shade, of a tiny particular easily passed over, for any other actress—but for her it was of vast importance.

She immediately sent the secretary of the company to Asolo. He telegraphed that he was unable to find

the manuscript. She replied : " Fill the trunks that you find with all the manuscripts and send at once."

Fourteen trunks arrived, in which she herself searched and . . . found.

Though the opening at Turin met with such brilliant success, there was quite a difference a few months later at the " Costanzi " of Rome (when the immense theatre seemed frozen by the reverent coldness that greeted the first performance). That evening the reality surpassed the dream, for the younger part of the audience had only heard of two Duses—the revealing reality, and the exquisite affectation—and before them there was a third Duse, of immaculate light. . . . Instead of the young, agitated woman of the fragrantly salt-scented hair, there came A Lady from the Sea, white-haired—whose voice alone rendered the entire spirituality of the drama.

In the second act, when Ellida confessed to her husband, the very depths of the sea were sounded in her words. The marvel of Ibsen's understanding of harmony, and his ability to express tragic poetry in simple prose, were more than eloquently revealed by Eleonora Duse's interpretation that evening. . . . There was no declamation, no singing dialogue—the actors were human beings.

The final curtain brought a quiet, respectful enthusiasm : for the mystic charm of the grand tragédienne had been too superior to arouse clamorousness.

In hushed voices the audience, filing out of the theatre, spoke of her :

" She's old."

" Yes, but the divine spark is still there."

" That's true, for after the first impression you forgot that her face was pale and lined and her lovely wayward hair white."

" She makes one think of a saint who has come

back to earth to teach mere mortals how to live. . . . If I have to go without a dinner or so, in order to buy my ticket, I shall hear her in every play she gives. . . . Just the sound of her voice, that glorious silver tone, is enough to make a man forget his troubles."

She was glorious, but different from the old days ; and the first tour brought forth nothing but praise. In the big cities she played to full houses, with a success that was never clamorous.

Then came a short period of enforced rest, after which she called Ruggero Lupi, an excellent young actor, in Zacconi's place.

To realise the terrible difficulty of the short season one should hear Lupi tell of the ill-fated tour of the provincial towns. The Duse's physical suffering, half-filled theatres, small profits and little success.

She resisted, and that was all. Ether, oxygen, remedies which were not always sufficient. On the stage she leaned against tables or chairs for support, murmuring :

"Lupone . . . Lupone . . . I can't go on."

She looked frequently at her hands, much as a very ill person does.

One evening, with a smile of sweetest sacrifice, she said :

"These provincial people are right. The prices are too high to admire, to hear, to see an old woman."

There was no resentment in her voice, rather a sense of humility, as of the labourer who finds consolation in the work well done.

Detached from the world, she acted.

Detached, one might say from her body, she acted : for to win success another time she had nothing but her sacred pain. No longer the tenacious desire ; no longer the strange charm that was more than beauty, nor the legendary glimmer : merely an image of the past as a comparison to exiled old age. In the

new world anxious for light, colour and fantasia who would be able to understand the melancholy lonely pilgrim taking again to the road ? Could a voice like hers, that was almost a tender lament, be heard among the hurried, nervous population ?

Though a considerable amount of money was taken, the expenses of the company were heavy, for the actors were paid by the day, while the performances were limited to one or two at most each week ; and there were weeks, even months, when she was absolutely unable to play, and the amount to be paid out remained the same.

In the spring of 1922, owing to the Duse's illness, all engagements were cancelled and the company disbanded, to be reorganised in August, 1922, when Memo Benassi became the leading man.

They opened at Trieste in September. The reception was one of fervid adoration, particularly on the part of the women, who had organised a special committee to pay homage to the Duse. . . . The first evening they scattered flowers all along the street from her hotel to the theatre, and when she arrived they were kneeling about the stage-door to exalt the actress, and also the woman who in her sublime strength during the years of the War had in her very silence wrought miracles of consolation and courage. This homage of the city liberated from Austrian rule was a public rendering of thanks to one who had helped towards its freedom.

At Turin, a few months later, word was received that Sarah Bernhardt would be in Genoa in a couple of days to play at the Paganini Theatre. The Duse sent for the faithful Enif, and offered her a mission that filled the timid little actress with fear.

" Sarah Bernhardt arrives at Genoa the day after

to-morrow"—the Duse went directly to the subject in hand. "I want her to receive my salutations. You know how to save an annoying situation by charming finesse, so I am sure I can trust you with this." Without waiting for a reply she revealed her plan: "You will select two hundred roses, rose de France—be sure that they *are* rose de France—then you will leave for Genoa. You will take them to her at her hotel—not on the stage—and with them this note. . . . The roses must be in a beautiful bunch, untied, so that when she takes them they will fall all about her. . . .

"You quite understand? Yes, and I'm sure you will do all this with finesse, in twenty-four hours."

Having acquired more faith in herself from the Grand Teacher's words than in thirty years of auto-suggestion, Enif Robert left Turin.

"If the Duse has faith in me," she thought, "what does it matter what I become?"

Arrived at Genoa she took the roses to the French actress's hotel. But she could not be received because an automobile accident had delayed the arrival, and "Madame" had only two hours to rest before going to the theatre, so could not be disturbed.

Therefore it was Fate that took the roses, against the wish of the giver, to the stage of the Paganini Theatre that evening.

Sarah Bernhardt was enchanted by the delicate fragrant shower of her own French roses that fell about her. She embraced and kissed many times the little messenger, with almost violent effusion, and deluged her with questions:

"Where is the Duse? Here? I know that she plays the day after to-morrow. Can I see her? I should be so happy to have a long chat with her!"

When told that the Duse was at Turin and would not arrive until the day of the performance, she burst into new effusiveness.

" Oh ! what a pity ! I am truly desolate ! I would so gladly have told her personally of my gratitude for her charming thought, instead of telegraphing ! "

And after having received other expansive expressions of thanks, Enif Robert was able to get away from the loquacious Sarah.

" Well, how did it go ? " the Duse asked when she saw Mme Robert.

" Signora, forgive me, but I found myself so confused by the excess of unexpected embraces—kisses and impulsive hugs—that . . . I didn't make any of the respectful, deferential speeches that you expected me to."

" Oh ! " the Duse said gaily. " I forgot to warn you ! For the first time it is truly impressive to see her impetuous and loudly-gay manner of precipitating herself upon a person. She is a vivacious personality, astonishingly so for her age. . . . I'm sure that if we had met she would have said with perfect ease : ' I am short a leg, and what are you short of ? ' And I would have been obliged to reply : ' A lung.' . . . And that, despite our courage, would have been an indescribable sadness."

While rehearsing with Zacconi, before beginning the engagement in 1921, Eleonora Duse formed a most affectionate friendship with Luciano Zacconi—the youngest son of the great actor—an adorable child of four. He was the one person, at that time, who found no difficulty in getting close to the Duse.

Luciano knew the way to her dressing-room, and went in whenever he saw fit, always welcomed, and even permitted to sit on her lap. Between the two there was a continual exchange of courtesies. The Duse made Luciano a present of an automobile that moved by itself, and in exchange he wrote her an autographed letter.

The automobile moved by itself : that was fine—but it was painted black.

"I told you I wanted a white one," the child announced to the great actress.

"All right," the Duse replied with loving patience.

"I will give you a white one."

And as she didn't want the little soul to be tormented by waiting too long for the desired automobile, she herself went to search for it. Happy in the thought of the happiness her present would bring to the child, she sought until she found the toy.

On the evening of the opening at the Balbo Theatre, a few minutes before the curtain, when the Duse, more than nervous, was anxiously awaiting the call, the door of her dressing-room burst open, and Luciano precipitated himself on her lap, crying at the top of his baby voice : "*Viva la Duse !*"

How the child had succeeded in eluding the severe guards and passing unobserved through the many corridors to the dressing-room no one ever knew. His was the first demonstration that saluted her return, and in the sincerity of the good wishes and the childish cordiality she found a force and faith to more serenely confront the great battle.

And while the Bernhardt was touring Italy, being carried in an armchair from the hotel to the automobile, and then to the stage, unable to stand without a support, the Duse was still able to walk, for, fortunately, she had both her legs, but the force she used in acting with only one lung was even greater than that of the Bernhardt.

The Italians under protest went to hear the Bernhardt, a few to the Duse, and, still under protest, to Zacconi, who with a mediocre company was at that time touring Italy.

"What's happened to us this year?" one heard

on all sides. "Our theatres are overflowing with youth : Bernhardt, Duse, and Zacconi ! Isn't there some other old actor who wants to inflict himself, or herself, upon the Italian public ? "

So, though business was good in every city, at least half of the audience was composed of foreigners who perhaps had never had an opportunity to hear the Duse in her prime. The enthusiasm worn off after the first year of her return, the Italians had very little desire to hear their own Duse, and until she was dead, with rare exceptions, they did not proclaim her other than great.

Late in October, 1922, the Duse was announced to play in Bologna, to be followed this time by the Bernhardt. . . . An American writer, who all her life had dreamed of one day seeing Eleonora Duse, had been staying in Bologna, but unfortunately was forced to leave the city the day before the first performance.

At the Hotel Baglioni she asked if rooms were reserved for Eleonora Duse. When informed that the signora went to the Hotel Brun, she telephoned to find out at what hour she was expected—eleven o'clock that evening. Going to a florist, she selected the loveliest roses there, and without knowing the Duse's preference, they were white. On her visiting card she wrote :

"A simple American writer sends her homage to the greatest actress in the world."

And the roses were sent to the hotel.

That evening at eleven o'clock, alone, the American woman went to the station, out on the platform, and finding a young man who, from his questions as to the exact arrival of the train, etc., she surmised was also waiting for the Duse, kept close to him.

She had always pictured a tall, imposing woman, and when a dear little old lady, dressed in black and

walking with a cane, came from the train, accompanied by the young man, she felt only one thing—a poignant desire to rush forward and embrace the living picture of her own grandmother. . . . Her heart beating faster, she followed the great woman at a discreet distance, wanting to at least see her get into the closed automobile that the hotel was to have sent for her. . . . By some mistake the Brun automobile was not there, but the Baglioni closed auto bus was. . . . The Duse went towards it. As she approached, the American stepped aside, her eyes intent on the lovely, lovely face.

“If the Brun automobile isn’t here”—the Duse turned to her companion, Mlle. Desirée, letting her glance rest for a second on the American woman—“we’ll go to the blessed Baglioni.”

Unfortunately, the young man had found a closed private automobile. With the suggestion of a smile she looked once more at the American, then turned away.

Those few words were enough for the woman to remember the voice always, and as she returned to the Baglioni, alone, a lump kept coming into her throat. . . . She had seen Eleonora Duse, heard her voice; the disillusion had been complete . . . but the reality was more beautiful than the illusion had ever been.

In May, 1923, after months of hopeful waiting, the same American writer, on the pretext of having written a play for her, was admitted to the presence of Eleonora Duse; and for forty minutes permitted to sit opposite her, to look into the marvellous eyes, to hear the voice that for those forty minutes was for her alone.

They discussed the play, which, unfortunately, was never read by the great actress owing to the translator failing to keep his word to have it ready by the month of August, when it was to have been taken to her at Asolo.

Of the conversation not one word has been or ever will be forgotten by the American woman, but the words which rest most vividly in her memory are these : "*Due sono la verità—quello che si dice, and quello che non si dice.*" (There are two truths—what one tells and what one never tells.)

When before leaving the American found courage to tell the Duse how she had gone to the station in Bologna just to see her, to know what the woman, more than the actress, was like, the Duse smiled wistfully and said :

"Is it possible that there is one woman in all the world who would take the trouble to go to a cold station and to wait for a train that was sure to be late—just to see an old woman? And you sent flowers, also, to an actress you had never seen?"

"Perhaps I sent the flowers as a tribute to Art." As she watched Eleonora Duse the American thought she saw the brightness of unshed tears in the wonderfully expressive eyes. "But," she added reverently, "I went to the station for the woman."

"Dear child, it wasn't worth your while." The Duse spoke sadly.

"Ah! signora, much as Eleonora Duse has thrilled me by her art, the glimpse of the dear little lady at the station thrilled me more."

"I am glad," she said softly.

During her stay at Milan in 1922, before putting on a revised version of "*La Citta Morta*," the Duse and Gabriele d'Annunzio met. He was in Milan for a political conference, and at her request went to the Hotel Cavour, where she was staying.

The blind Anna, as made over by the Duse, only said words of renunciation and farewell to life, the beauty and cruelty of which she had known. Before

presenting the character so entirely changed from the original, she wanted the author's approbation.

With her vivid sense of irony, even against herself, she recounted the brief visit :

The poet came to meet her as she entered the room—hands outstretched, and taking hers, he murmured :

“ My friend . . . ”

She paid no attention to his visible emotion and nothing was said of the long-dead past—glorious, joyous and sad. They talked of his drama, of his present work, and even what he still hoped to do. He had only words of praise for the modifications which she had made. . . . In saying farewell at the door of her sitting-room, a sudden wave of memory seemed to pass over him.

“ And yet,” he said, trying to keep hold of the friendly hand, “ not even you can imagine how much I loved you ! ”

And the Duse, serious, with that charming graciousness all her own, replied :

“ And, to-day, not even you can imagine how much I have forgotten—you ! ”

This was absolutely true. She had lived for so many years an intense spiritual life, far from terrestrial restlessness—she was restless, it is true, but it was the restlessness of a quality essentially higher—for she had forced herself to annihilate the tempestuous past, that had been the means of such intense suffering.

In January, 1923, at the Filodrammatici Theatre, Milan, the Duse gave her last performance in that city. . . . The theatre, which had been renovated, was badly heated. Owing to the cold, which she had always felt intensely, her performance was painful, her suffering plainly visible ; and at the end of the play, “ La Citta Morta,” instead of the three piercing

cries which she should have given, the Duse was only able to give one.

The following day she took to her bed, and eight days later pleurisy had developed, which kept her confined to her room for the balance of the winter.

Despite the constant use of oxygen and camphor, the asthma persisted without a moment's respite ; and yet, ill as she was, she never forgot the company depending upon her, nor would she consent to discharging them, as she had a perfect right to do.

Those who were near her then saw the most beautiful example of courage and resistance that can be imagined.

Feeling that she who had suffered would best know how to be calm and quiet near a sick person, she once again called upon the faithful Enif. . . . And in the months that followed there was never a lament, never a gesture of discouragement over her physical condition, nor a word about the financial ruin that the enforced repose was bringing upon her.

After patiently breathing the oxygen for the fifth time that day she said :

" Many times I have prepared myself for death. . . . I wonder why I must live on . . . ? " Then, with a resigned little gesture : " God doesn't want me ! "

With what faith she lived and suffered. . . . And how infinitely greater—I must repeat it—the woman was than the actress—and as actress she had no equal.

. . . Her soul was of unlimited spiritual resource, capable of penetrating into the infinite mysteries of religion and of comprehending what only an elect few are able to.

In the moments of calm between the spasms of coughing, sitting up in bed, she recounted one after

another the delicious incidents of her life, showing by her kind words how completely she had pardoned all those who had wronged or misunderstood her in the past.

Her especial gift was in being able to say in ten words, with a photographic clearness, what any other person would not have been able to say in a hundred.

"Read me a bit of Coué, he who helps to cure poor suffering flesh by the force of will."

After half an hour :

"Enough! Even certain moral medicine must be taken in drops."

And later the same day, while talking of those she had really cared for, she said :

"Oh, Yvette Guilbert, my dear Guilbert, how I should love to see her : she who renders the old French songs so deliciously. Yvette the inimitable. I believe I am homesick for a sight of her, for the nostalgic longing to hear the songs is a longing for the one who alone knows how to sing them."

With the oxygen near, from time to time opening the tube, she began to sing in a high falsetto, with little gestures of shame coquettishly hiding her face in a wide purple veil that she wore about her shoulders, partly covering the white dressing-gown :

*" Dites-moi que je suis belle,
Dites-moi que je suis belle ! "*

The Duse's correspondence was always copious. She wrote a great deal, arriving at an epistolary style of rare perfection.

Telegrams were her daily habit.

Telegrams that were short letters ; expensive cables which she never considered giving up in order to save on her annual expenses.

When the period of scarce funds came she did without many luxuries, but it was never possible for

her to give up books, flowers, or telegrams. . . . And there were days during the winter of 1923 when for her post alone she spent over two hundred lire, enough to have kept a small family in comparative ease.

During her long illness her correspondence was piled into a basket in her private sitting-room of the Hotel Cavour, at Milan. . . . Finally, in desperation, she charged Enif Robert to reply in her name to the most urgent letters ; and together they went through them.

Of the several hundred, a few are worth mentioning as a proof, not only of the strange human psychology but also of the great faith that many had in the possibility of help from the woman with undoubted powers of consolation, who, even when she could not give material aid, never failed to give a word of comfort.

An old actor asked her for . . . a grave !

He said he was too poor to procure it for himself, and implored her to let him die content : he asked nothing to relieve his declining days, but dying he wanted to know that he would have a worthy resting-place.

A Sister, head of an orphan asylum, turned to the Duse for pecuniary help. . . . A Sister looking to the theatre !

But the Duse was not only the actress, she was, even to those who did not know her personally, the Grand Creature of infinite spiritual resource, who treated the spirits of others, even in modest places.

The Sister asked also for a good word for her little orphans.

"What shall I say, mio Dio, to the lonely little ones . . . I . . . to-day ? I am so, so tired, I can no longer use my strength for the good of others."

She said it in a tone of voice that left no doubt of her true state of fatigue and renunciation.

So the improvised secretary wrote a few words that later she read to the "signora."

The letter began : " Reverend Mother."

The Duse burst out laughing as she said :

" Brava ! Brava ! How and where did you learn to deal with the religious orders ? I didn't suppose you had such a profound knowledge of the hierarchy of the convents ! " And she continued to laugh, heartily, approving the words of comfort and faith in God that the secretary read.

Then changing the subject : " You write very well : generally speaking, all women write well ; much better, especially letters, than men, no matter how cultivated they may be.

" I remember I wrote a letter many years ago, a very important letter, to a most illustrious person. A noted writer was with me, and I showed him what I had written. . . . ' More than good,' he said, ' I couldn't have done it better, or said more, myself.' "

" You understand how they put on airs ? And I thought then, that men sin when they fancy themselves the superior sex—and how they sin ! "

All religious orders, and particularly the nuns, had the greatest admiration for the Duse. In a certain convent, in the squalid room of a little nun, there is a large photograph of the grand actress. The Sister, a young peaceful soul, explained to an astonished visitor : " It is a face that reflects a grand interior beauty, and in looking at her, the living expression of humanity, I think of our intelligent saints and somehow feel better. What difference is it if Fate made her an actress ? "

Another of the numerous letters was from a young girl, who, after recounting at length the misery of the entire family, asked for money to buy a new uniform for her brother, a non-commissioned officer of the

navy, who could not join his ship unless he had one.

"What a pity not to be able to relieve the sufferings of those who turn to me for consolation," the sick woman said sadly. "I have always done what I could—and sometimes even more. To-day I can do nothing—I am ill and alone, at the head of a theatrical venture in a moment of difficulty. . . . No, I truly can do nothing."

The Duse had at times provided regally for many benefits, for money to her was never other than an instrument for the good of others.

From the moment that fame permitted her the free use of money, she spent at all times, and upon all occasions, with the free hand of a truly great lady.

"Before those who have nothing," she said, "I want to ask pardon for the little that I possess ; give all, in an anonymous gift."

Again she was well enough to get up. Once more she had beaten the dread monster back. (Alas ! it was her last victory over the inexorable disease.) And she was full of courage, strong, ready to resume her march.

She talked frequently of producing new plays : Pirandello had promised her something grand and sweet, Gino Rocca also was going to give her a true Italian mother. Edouard Schneider, the French playwright, and her very good friend, had written "Esaltation" for her. Over this play she was most enthusiastic, and ardently hoped to give it at a future date.

While searching for a rôle adapted to her, the Duse received several hundred manuscripts, and not a few authors had the honour of talking over their work with the great woman ; and the writer's own play : "The Mills of the Gods," also written specially for her, was looked upon with favour by the great Duse.

She had always had a reverent adoration for Paris, and envied the French their "Vieux Colombier," for it was just such a theatre that she dreamed of for herself either at Milan or Rome. This dream might have been realised had she lived longer, for until the time she left for the United States the project of giving her the Filodrammatici at Milan, as a theatre where young art, under her direction, would have its chance, was much talked of.

Some time during the long illness of the winter of 1923, Mussolini, the Italian Prime Minister, sent Margherita Sarfatti as his ambassadress to offer Eleonora Duse a pension from the Government, a sum sufficient to permit her to live without working.

When the object of the visit was timidly made known, the Duse replied promptly, and with great dignity :

"No, no, no! Thank you, but I do not ask anything! I do not want anything! I cannot accept anything! I am profoundly grateful—even moved. . . . Please tell the Prime Minister that. But what he offers is not possible! We are a young country; Italy is poor, everyone who possibly can must give instead of taking—give with all his strength. . . . As long as I can drag about, as long as I can stand, I must work! I only ask to be able to work, for it is right that I should live by my work alone!"

Admiring her courage, but not quite convinced, Margherita Sarfatti later returned to timidly insist upon the Government's offer at least being considered. She found the same determination on the Duse's part.

"No money, no! If the Prime Minister truly wants to help me, I will ask two favours of him: to do what he can to enable me to lease the Filodrammatici for a season, and"—with an exquisitely beautiful gesture, "I have a superb offer from the United States,

and I should like to go—to make our beautiful language sing once more in ears unaccustomed to it. But, if I should die over there, who would think of my company? So I want you to ask the Prime Minister to solemnly assure me of the ambassador's assistance for my actors; in case of my illness to see that they get their money from the American manager, or if I die to send them safely back to Italy." And turning the palms of her hands upwards towards Heaven she invoked aid, not for herself but for the others. "How can I," she added sadly, "how can I abandon them so? No—I could not take the chance of going to a far-away land unless I knew that in dying I could be tranquil for the safety of my actors."

And when Mussolini gave his promise, and still further insisted upon immediate financial aid, she accepted thirty thousand lire, in order to pay her company for the weeks that she had been unable to work, but not one sou of the amount was spent on herself.

The days of convalescence passed slowly, and as soon as she was able to travel it was arranged for her to pass the early spring in Naples, where it was hoped the balmy air and warm sunshine would help in the cure and enable her to fulfil a long-promised engagement there.

The papers in February of 1923 published a bitter letter from d'Annunzio to the Italian Press. . . . A breath of frozen discontent seemed to have passed over the poet's spirits, and the letter was full of unpleasant thoughts.

From Gardone, the refuge of the hero of the formidable soul, into whose life of highest poetry a thing of profound significance had come with the golden days of his soldier life, he wrote the message full of

displeasure, irony, melancholy, and bitterness to the Press.

Still convalescent, the Duse, who had every reason to complain of the cruel hostility of life that day, heartily disapproved of the poet publically giving vent to his rancour.

" All this shows what it means not to have a friend near in certain moments of discouragement which come even to the strongest, most tempered souls. . . . A sincere friend, one who is intelligent enough to destroy a letter in time. . . . To-day he is suffering intensely. . . . He sought a superb death on the battlefields, flying over Vienna, or in any of the numerous episodes of the past, sought for, and lived through with magnificent, courageous audaciousness.

" He lived the War as no other Italian ; his heroic soul breathing freely in the atmosphere of danger and passionate patriotism.

" Then he could have died well.

" Now he is bearing his cross . . . he is tired . . . I also am tired, and yet I live. He also lives. He, as he so ardently wished, should be dead. . . . Still we are both alive . . . why ? "

From above she sought the answer to her question, for instinctively her eyes turned to the window, to the dull sky of the winter morning. . . . For a moment she was silent, far away ; then serenely she talked again on another subject.

Her faith in God had been her consolation then, as at many other times in the immediate past.

At Naples, despite the effort she tried to make, it was impossible for her to act. The cough was incessant, absorbing the little vitality she had.

In a beautiful room of the Hotel Vesuvius, she sat for hours each day in a big armchair beside the window overlooking the sea. Dressed in a soft white

frock, the large folds falling gracefully about her, her face no less white than the frock, she seemed as she talked more a saint come to life than the world's greatest tragedienne, the woman of infinite caprices, mortal sins and sorrows. . . .

Naples, the beautiful, had not been lucky for her ; for three years consecutively she had gone there to play, and each time, for one reason or another, she had not been able to fulfil the engagement.

This time it was the terrible weakness as well as the cough that kept her confined to her room.

Often she kept Enif Robert with her for hours at a time, the alert mind of the younger woman a delightful distraction for her.

They talked very little of the theatre, and less of what is generally supposed to interest women, but sometimes the conversation would turn to the writers of this and other generations. Once, in speaking of Ibsen, she mentioned a visit she had paid to his house during a brief Norwegian summer.

She had found the old man disgusted with everything, the world at large and Art in particular. In the house built high above the fjords, safe from the winter snows, all was sad.

Going to a little-travelling-bag she took out a locket containing a lock of hair.

" Ibsen's son sent me this as a souvenir when his father died. For me he was the grandest playwright of this century ; and after him, Bernard Shaw."

Matilde Sarao, the friend of her youth, was among the many visitors during the two months passed in Naples. . . . After one of these visits the faithful Enif found the Duse gay, serene, ready to laugh and joke, as in her happiest hours.

The Sarao, accomplished writer, and most cultured of women, had said to the girlhood friend :

"Courage, Eleonora! God has never abandoned you, and He never will."

These simple words exchanged between the two great women, who could, had they desired, have had a conversation of the highest and most profound interest, have a certain significance.

The humility of the thought, and the hope it contained, was an eloquent consolation for the Duse. . . . And in America the following year, during the last days of her life, she frequently repeated :

"As Matilde said : 'God will not abandon me.'"

By the end of April she was strong enough to go out, and even to travel. . . . At the Pergola Theatre, Florence, she gave three performances during the month of May ; and it was while there, at the Hotel Italie, that it was arranged for her to go to London in June for a series of six special matinées at the New Oxford Theatre.

The three plays to be given there—"Cosi Sia," "The Lady from the Sea," and "La Citta Morta"—were rehearsed in Florence. During the rehearsals the possibility of a voyage to the United States was discussed.

"Nothing is certain," the Duse announced ; "we will see later ; now we will go to London, and perhaps that will be the bridge towards the other world across the seas. So we will leave, children ; courage, and strong hearts ! At London I have my little oasis of well-being. . . . I have also many faithful friends, and a circle of good souls who call me *Sister*."

For many years the English manager, Charles Cochran, had tried to persuade the Duse to come to London, and when in May, 1923, she telegraphed him that she would like to give six matinées under his direction, he thought she was joking.

The conditions were all arranged by telegram, and

before Cochran could send her a contract she telegraphed that she was on the point of leaving.

While the plans were being made for London, Mussolini, from whom nothing that is good for the welfare of the Patria escapes notice, again offered the glorious Italian actress an appanage, so that she could remain in Italy free from financial worries.

She refused as before.

Remaining in Italy she wanted to *work*; as she had already stated, she did not ask for, nor wish, money that would be dead capital for the country; instead she desired a theatre at Rome, financed at the start by the Government, later to be self-supporting—she herself to act from time to time, thus having a right to the money that the Government would pay her.

Mussolini's exact reply was :

“Write when you think best. If it is in the interest of the Italian theatre your proposition will be law for the government presided over by me.”

The Duse's admiration for Mussolini was unlimited; she felt and said that even across the momentary adversity he was the man who could lead Italy to her high destiny. . . . She had perfect faith in the government under him.

She would write; certain that her wish would be granted; but, in the meantime, arrangements had been made and it was necessary to go to London.

Mr. Cochran, upon receipt of her telegram advising him that she was leaving, went at once to Paris to meet her and accompanied her to London. The short trip tired her terribly; nevertheless, the day after her arrival she wrote him from Claridge's:

“Everything has gone well, and I thank you with all my heart. I am more than happy to be here with you. Best wishes and salutations.”

Her greatest preoccupation before going to London was for Ellen Terry ; so much so that in one of her telegrams she asked to have a box reserved for the grand English tragedienne for the first performance—a request which she repeated in a letter to Cochran a few days before the first *matinée*.

Contrary to the expectations of many, Ellen Terry was not at the station to receive Eleonora Duse upon her arrival in London, owing, it is believed, to indisposition ; however, her daughter was there in her place, and during all of the Duse's stay was most devoted and attentive. . . . For each of the six performances she took entire charge of the stage lights, and saw to the minor arrangements of the scenes.

The grand Italian had a vast number of ardent admirers among the English public, where she was considered not only the greatest actress of her time but the highest type of lady of the theatre.

Mr. Cochran, who had also managed Bernhardt for various London engagements, said :

“ It would be impossible to find two women more diverse. Sarah was born to fight and to triumph over all difficulties. Instinctively I wrote Sarah, yet it would have been difficult for me to have addressed the grand Italian so. With Sarah it was natural to talk business, even argue, knowing beforehand that I would get the worst of it ; but with the Duse, though she was always exquisitely courteous with me, I could never argue over money matters.”

Six performances at the beautiful New Oxford Theatre—six *matinées* with not even standing room. Every well-known personality in London went to see

her, and there was enthusiasm such as the cold English public rarely demonstrates.

And the Duse was comforted : the fine intelligent audience accepted her white hair, the old age not in any way veiled by artifice, the something singular and superior that time and the illusion of the stage could not destroy.

Those who knew of the physical force she was consuming found their admiration mingled with pity—increased by it.

“*Così Sia*” (Thy Will be done), a prose poem, a simple human short story, transformed at her request by Gallarati-Scotti, the author, into a soulful drama, as rendered by Eleonora Duse was the most mystic play ever seen perhaps on any stage. . . . When in the second act she was denounced by her son, for whom she had sacrificed her life, the Duse reached a supremacy in art that had never been equalled, and could never be surpassed. There was something so superb in her humility, something so divine, that I shall not even attempt to describe it.

In her dressing-room at the New Oxford Theatre cylinders of oxygen were continually kept ready in case of sudden illness. And when she was taken from the stage after the first performance of “*Così Sia*,” overcome by the tremendous force she had used, she fell fainting on the lounge in her dressing-room, where she remained in a sort of catalepsy for nearly an hour.

And still forcing her will to do her bidding the courageous woman continued the engagement ; and even managed to find sufficient strength to see many of her faithful friends, who overwhelmed her with kindness and affection.

No beautiful young prima donna ever received more or rarer flowers than the woman of sixty-four, nor grander homage from great and small. . . . After each

performance they called her again and again before the curtain, loath to let her leave them ; and when she left the stage door hundreds of men and women thronged the street, a dense crowd on either side from the door to the waiting automobile. . . . And when the little old lady in her modest black coat and hat appeared, loud clapping and cheers rent the air : "Duse ! Duse ! Long live the Duse !"

After the last performance, for forty minutes they kept her before the curtain to answer the unending applause, the entire audience crowding forward towards the stage, throwing flowers, and calling : "Long live the Duse ! *Viva* Eleonora Duse ! Come back to us, Duse ! Come back soon !"

Tears ran unheeded down the white cheeks. This demonstration from a public little given to showing a sentiment whatsoever moved her deeply. . . . She was old, ill, but they wanted her. These stalwart English people loved the frail little woman unable to openly express her thanks ; and across the footlights, without knowing what they said, she understood.

There were tears in the eyes of all her actors, and there were tears in the eyes of most of the audience . . . for what is more beautiful, or can so deeply stir even the coldest hearts, than—in the midst of glory—an eternal farewell. . . . They asked her to come back—yet many, many in the vast audience *knew* she never could.

On the return trip from London the Duse stopped for a few days in Paris. In Ada Rubinstein's spacious, elegant, studious drawing-room, on the grand piano, she signed her contract with Morris Gest for twenty performances in the principal eastern cities of the United States.

The company returned to Italy, and the Duse eventually went to Switzerland, where she hoped to

be joined by Edouard Schneider, the French playwright, and his wife.

Arrangements were also made in Paris for the Duse to give a few performances in Switzerland, alternating with Yvette Guilbert, which would have been most advantageous for her, as the good kind friend Guilbert had offered to play twice to the Duse's once, and to divide the proceeds. . . . A misunderstanding on the part of the management brought about by the interference of the Duse's friends was the reason for the project falling through.

Between Lausanne and Berne, Eleonora Duse passed the last summer of her life, calm and peaceful after having signed the contract that was to take her to America in October.

But even with all plans made she was not permitted to rest until October ; for in September, tied by a severe contract which it seems was made practically without her consent, the poor Duse was obliged to go to Vienna for twenty performances, but, having to sail October 6th, it was impossible to give the stipulated number.

By the help of her lawyers it was finally established that she was to give three performances in September, the other seventeen beginning February 10th, 1924, after her return from America.

The three performances in the old Austrian capital aroused the usual affectionate ovations and at the last one she received the shower of flowers for which the Viennese are famous and which they had never missed giving to their favourite foreign actress.

Outwardly strong, inwardly fearful, the courage to affront the fatigue of the long trip, and infinite complications of the tour of the United States came to the Nomad . . . came through her faith in Him, the Ruler of man's destiny.



BUST OF MADAME ADA RUBINSTEIN.

By George Fite Waters.

“ *Signore, Se sei tu,
Commanda ch'io venga a te
Sopra le acque.*”

“ Christ, if Thou art Thou,
Command that I come to Thee,
Over the waters.”

PART IV

The Departure for New York—Touring the United States—Illness—
Death at Pittsburg, Pa., U.S.A., April 21st, 1924—Funeral in
New York—The Arrival in Italy—Her Last Journey—Her
Final Resting-place.

BEFORE arriving at a definite decision as to whether she dared venture to America, the Duse talked with many of the young Italian writers, and one and all were impressed by the profound religiousness in the woman who had always in the past demonstrated a complete indifference to all matters regarding the Church.

From the time of her return to the stage she spoke continually of a desire to unite the Church and the theatre, believing that the stage could reach the faithless far easier than the Church could. By the presenting of religious plays she was convinced that many wanderers would eventually be brought back to the Fold.

De Flers, the French writer, speaking of his last visit to the Duse, in 1922, said that one part of her conversation was most significant as to the trend of the woman's thoughts :

" I would like, before I leave for always, to raise myself for my art, and, by it, to the grand subjects ; sacred and mystic subjects. . . . The theatre came from the Church, I would like it to return with me. . . . I have a beautiful play that is to be my first step (' *Così Sia* '). You will see it one day."

To Renato Simoni, the finest Italian dramatic critic, she said : " Perhaps I have lived wrong. I frequently recall my father's words, and wonder. He told me : ' Remember that a woman's place is in the home, where she has great duties of kindness to fulfil.' . . . Have I not gone against my destiny, leaving the normal route, running about here and there—an actress without rest or peace ? " Sad tears were in her eyes ; then of a sudden they dried and a sweet light overspread her face. . . . " After all," she added, " I have lived humanly. I have given myself to many things—to life with inexhaustible ardour—and I am not sorry."

And later, when mention had been made of a conciliation with the Church, she answered softly :

" I am not yet a practitioner, but I believe."

She had read with interest Papini's " Life of Christ," and Maurice Blondell's " L'Action," and frequently indulged in long talks on religion with her dear friend Tommaso Gallarati-Scotti, an ardent Catholic. At a certain point she smiled :

" You don't perhaps know that I am like the little dancer who, before going on the stage, made the sign of the Cross ? Go to St. Carlo's Church, there you will find all the flowers I received last evening. . . . I sent them as an offering to the Madonna."

Concluding :

" Notwithstanding all the heavy luggage that encumbers me, I am returning to God as I returned to Art : the best I know how. . . . Yesterday I read words from the Gospel that greatly comforted me : Peter sees Jesus far away on the waters, and says to Him :

" Christ, if Thou art Thou,
Command that I come to Thee,
Over the waters."

With the hope of finding her God over the waters, she put her house in order ; made ready for the trip.

With the exception of her young leading man, all the actors were nervous and fearful for the effect the American tour might have on the poor body, tormented and devastated by illness.

A few hours before her departure from Vienna for Cherbourg, via Paris, the Duse sent for the entire company.

"We are leaving, *figlioli* (my children)," she said, "to go far away, on a long artistic pilgrimage. We must all do our best—stick together through thick and thin. . . . There is nothing to fear, for on the other side of the Atlantic we have a faithful public who even now are acclaiming us. . . . You can have faith in me, for your return is assured, even if we should not come back together."

To all of their protests she smiled serenely, and continued :

"What is to be will be. In life one must think of everything, be prepared for anything, without stupid sadness or fear. . . . Mussolini, as you all know, wants to keep me in Italy, but, as yet, there is no possibility of my having a theatre in Rome established for me, and I cannot accept unless I give something in return. . . . While I am away the matter may be adjusted, and when we return—who knows?"

With motherly sweetness she saluted them all, and for each one she had some special word of kindly cheer.

Too preoccupied about her health to say the words of farewell and good wishes for a safe crossing, they offered instead many, many roses, a subtle pain in their hearts as one by one they took and kissed the beautiful white hand.

"*Ragazzi* (boys and girls), you are going off without a manager—in other words, without a guide—but I

trust and believe in you, and know that all will be well. . . . I arrive before you do, so you must send me a cable from mid-ocean. . . . We will meet in New York. *Arrivederci !* ”

With a limpid, tender glance she looked from one serious face to another, gathered up all the gorgeous white roses, and without another word disappeared into the adjoining room.

The company was sent to Genoa to sail on an Italian liner, while the Duse, accompanied by Miss Katherine Onslow, her companion (Mlle. Desirée) and a maid, on October 6th embarked from Cherbourg.

At Cherbourg she also bid farewell to her daughter, Henriette, whom she was never to see again.

Courageous and serene she departed, and in the same state of serenity landed at New York, after an ideal crossing, without having suffered a moment from seasickness.

At New York the greatest triumph of her career awaited her, and a reception that is rarely accorded to other than Royalty. All traffic was stopped and, escorted by mounted policemen, the automobile that took the Grand Actress to the Hotel Majestic passed swiftly through the superb streets of the Metropolis, where even the pedestrians paused a moment as she passed.

The marvel of the reception filled her with fear—fear that in her frail condition she would not be able to reply to the demand that was being put upon her.

Three days before the company's arrival at New York the promised cable was sent : “ We are coming willingly, devotedly.” The reply reached the ship a few hours later : “ As a mother, I await you.—Eleonora Duse.”

When the actors arrived she was full of the wonderful reception and the grandness of the New Yorkers,

but anxious as to the results of the much-anticipated engagement.

At London she had been received more intimately, with affectionate devotion, and she had felt at home there among friends ; but New York was immense, exacting, rich, and formidable. There everything was modern, of the highest class. New York was a city that could not easily be deluded.

So in fear and trepidation she appeared, at the first performance of "The Lady from the Sea," in the vast Metropolitan Opera House.

Arthur Symons once spoke of the Duse as "a chalice for the wine of imagination." And I doubt if that perfect phrase, as Kenneth Macgowan wrote, "ever fitted more perfectly than it did in the sixty-fifth year of her life when she came out, a very remote figure, upon the yawning stage of the Metropolitan. Then she was doubly the chalice. To the mystery and exaltation of her art was added a strange element of aloofness which made her, not the hybrid of actress and dramatic character to which this curious art of the theatre accustoms us, but a great person in the cast of another drama, which we call 'Life.' . . . Our imagination rose to the art of voice and hands and body, but it rose, also, to an art of living which brought this extraordinary woman before us. It rose higher, I think, to the woman Duse than to the actress ; for not only an alien tongue, but the vast gulf of the Metropolitan intervened between our emotions and Ibsen's 'Lady from the Sea.' Duse's art is more than realism, but it is founded, nevertheless, upon the intimacy of the realistic theatre, and neither at the Metropolitan nor at the Century, where she played for the balance of her brief engagement, can the living word of the playwright and the living presence of the player fuse with the soul of the spectator. In both houses the Duse was not so much an actress

ministering to emotion as an extraordinary person, a legendary heroine, perhaps a goddess come before us. And it was not quite as though she were a great woman appearing in our midst. Behind the footlights, and across the gulf of these abominable theatres, Eleonora Duse became a kind of story. She seemed to be a legend of herself.

“ All of which is a very murky effort to say how strangely the figure of the Duse moved many of us on this epochal occasion, and how oddly the art of the Duse left our playgoing emotions cold. Concede this anæsthesia, admit that we did not suffer with the mother of ‘ Ghosts ’ and the woman of ‘ The Lady from the Sea,’ then let us look more closely at the art which, under happier circumstances, might have left us wrung with the emotion of Ibsen.

“ Eleonora Duse has reached an age at which actors retain none too much of their vigour, and actresses are so sapped that only the greatest—Bernhardt and this Italian—can keep a grip on their art. Duse has lived more truly and more fully than Bernhardt, and given more of herself to life. . . . Duse is weak ; she cannot play more than twice a week, and two hours on the stage leave their mark upon her as she takes her final curtain. The Duse has never tolerated make-up or any artifice of wig or clothing to imitate vanishing youth. So to-day her Ellida Wangel would be aged, and her fascination for the young sailor a disgusting absurdity, if it were not for the soul and the art that still animate her so fully. The voice and hands, of which so much has been said, are never exaggerated. There seems nothing studied in her actions, nothing deliberate ; sometimes her hands flash nervously across her face when we are most anxious to see her expression. Her movements are not an artifice but an inevitable outcome of emotion felt in the very soul

and irresistibly commanding a body fashioned consummately to obey. It is here in the soul of Duse and in the mystery of the body made one with it that we sense the ultimate of her art. And we cannot tag and label it.

“ We can be downright and documentary, however, on one aspect of the Duse. It is the relation of her acting to current modes. We have had, roughly, three kinds of playing in this first generation of the twentieth century. We have had the exploitation of personality coloured by artifice, a thing that begins with any one of our agreeable women stars and rises to the brittle pinnacles of Bernhardt. We have had the exploitation of personality fitted to type parts, a cast of characters by mail-order, a kind of stock-room realism. And we have had—most notably in the Moscow Art Theatre—true impersonation, made up of the surface art of wig and grease-paint, and of the deep of emotional identification. The Duse gives us a fourth art, an art unique in its combination of qualities. . . . She is unforgettably a person ; she is the Duse. She is skilful with voice and body, but by inner emotion, not by artifice. The bare, clean skin of her cheeks speaks both sincerity and a kind of realism that stands against the theatrical even at its best. She turns her back on all the deliberate maskings of face and body which make so much of the art of the Russians, and which they make so much of. Eleonora Duse dresses her hair differently for the ‘ Lady from the Sea ’ and the mother in ‘ Ghosts,’ and she wears appropriately different garments ; yet it is essentially by the movements of the hands, face and voice that she defines the gulf between the two characters. Through the hands, the face and the voice, the Duse remains the Duse. It is only that an inner spirit has changed, and emanations appear before us in wrist or smile or intonation. The Duse understands more

completely than any actress the mysteries by which the inner spirit is kindled and the emanations arise."

From more than a hundred newspapers I have read only praise for her art and admiration for the woman ; as one of the critics of a New York paper wrote :

" Great and small from every walk of life went to pay homage to the Lady of the Stage, the fragile woman, of the pale face full of shadows and sweetness, who knows how to shed light where for our eyes there are only shadows."

That performance at the Metropolitan was memorable, unbelievable. Every seat in the house was sold in advance, and long before the curtain rose there was not even standing room. The total box-office receipts amounted to over thirty thousand dollars.

The frail little lady with the dun cheeks and corded neck had made the biggest audience ever gathered together in the world for a dramatic performance. . . . After the final curtain there was a moment's intense silence, then, with the realisation that the lovely voice was still, the frantic applause broke forth.

The repertoire in America consisted of " The Lady from the Sea," " Ghosts," " Cosi Sia," " La Citta Morta," and " La Porta Chiusa."

The *première* at New York was followed by even greater favour from the public, and was an authentic triumph at which it is difficult to assist in this practical age.

The Grand Duse had won her way into the American hearts as a queen might have, and for her it had been one of the most trying battles of her career.

The great victory seemed to give her new energy, for after the second performance all sense of fear for

success left her. She was gayer and even had less asthma ; and those who were near began to have hopes of real recuperation.

New York as a city still frightened her ; the luxurious orgy of Fifth Avenue and Broadway bewildered her ; in the midst of the universal gaiety she longed to hide her face and to humanly cry.

The great breath of freshness from Central Park that came into her apartment at the Majestic Hotel had truly, though momentarily, given new life to her worn-out organism, filling the exhausted lungs with a fleeting vitality.

The critics continued to write of her with enthusiasm, tireless in their praise of her unique art ; and she was contented, her only worry being the insistence of the Press for interviews.

She lived a religiously silent life, she who was so splendid and generous with money, spending with avarice the poor patrimony of strength that was left to her.

She knew only too well that in order to continue to make good she must reserve all her force for the performance, so it was only possible to support the most intimate and friendly conversations in which she could be silent at will.

None of the reporters seemed to be able to understand how necessary it was to keep the door of her apartment locked against the possibility of intruders. Nor was it always understood that Mlle. Desirée, her companion for twenty-five years, was merely doing her duty in refusing admittance to all.

Before the last performance at the Century Theatre a banquet was given, by the Italians residing in New York, in Eleonora Duse's honour, at which the entire company was present—but the guest of honour's place was vacant. She was quite well, but—crowds and speeches were annoying. The evening passed

alone at her hotel with a book was more to her taste.

The only entertainment that she permitted herself was going to two performances of the Russian actors, the magnificent company managed by Stanislavsky.

Morris Gest, himself of Russian descent, presented the grand actor to the souveraine Italian actress, and the Duse, who had always had a profound admiration for the Russian school of acting, not only went to the two performances, but insisted upon going on the stage to talk with the actors, adding her praise to the public's applause.

At Boston the reception was warmly enthusiastic ; and when the theatre was emptied groups of men and women, many with tears in their eyes, gathered in the streets all along the way from the theatre to the hotel, impeding the passage of the automobile. And from every side one heard in French as well as English :

“ Tournez ! Tournez ! Come back ! Come back ! ”

But the tour of the United States was nearing its end.

“ And the trombones,” the Duse asked Enif Robert one day while they were chatting in her room of the hotel at Boston, “ what are they doing ? ”

For her the trombones were the actors who sustained the dignified and serious parts, and who in the productions had the side rôles corresponding to the trombones in an orchestra.

The Duse's witticisms in her delightful moments of frank gaiety were irresistible ; but when she used the ridiculous name of trombones Mme Robert had no idea to whom she was referring.

“ You know the trombone ? He is there as the improvised *allegrezza*,” she explained, “ accompanying the other instruments by a gesture and musical

cadence : the violin, violoncello, harp, bassoon, and finally the trombone : pe pe pe pe—a pepe pepe—and pepepepepe ! ”

A beautiful parody on certain parts that unfortunately exist in nearly all plays.

Still, on the Duse's part there was no idea of making fun of the men who sustained the thankless rôles in her company ; on the contrary, she always had respect for even the least important of her actors ; and especially for those who were with her then, far from the Patria, she had more than a sense of professional duty and sisterly artistic affection.

But woe to him who was not attentive to discipline.

An old Italian actor, for many years established in New York, had in some way managed to be hidden among the scenery at almost every performance.

At the last performance at the Century Theatre, forgetting prudence in his enthusiasm, when the Duse came off the stage after the second act to go to her dressing-room, he precipitated himself upon her, and falling to his knees murmured :

“ Ave, ave, ave ! ”

For the Duse the day of a performance was sacred, and from the time she entered her dressing-room until she was ready to leave the theatre she never permitted the slightest distraction from the “ stage picture ” ; nor during the day while mentally preparing herself did she read her letters or telegrams, or receive even the most intimate friends. . . . Moreover, there was a severe penalty for anyone who greeted her while she was in the spirit of the personage—and that evening, still wrapped up in the mental desperation of the blind Anna in “ La Citta Morta,” the sight of a strange man rising before her for a moment stunned her, then brought a quick unpleasant realisation of her surroundings.

“ How did you get in here ? ” she asked.

The tone was not exactly encouraging to the poor man, who had already repented of his impulsive daring and audacious act of devotion.

"I am ——" he pronounced his name in a fearful whisper.

The Duse gave him a withering glance that covered him from head to feet, then said dryly as she turned quickly towards her dressing-room :

"*Benissimo, continui pure ad esserlo !*" (Very good, continue to be that.)

The tempest broke forth the moment she was within the four white canvas violet-embroidered walls that composed the portable room where she changed.

The secretary and Mlle. Desirée were sent for at once, and angrily questioned. Neither of them had the slightest idea how the strange man had obtained admittance.

The following day a letter was posted in the theatre advising the actors that there would be a fine of one thousand lire for anyone who permitted an outsider to come on the stage. For several weeks after a private detective service was kept up, but the culprit was never discovered.

Exaggerated ? No, not if one realised how integrally she lived in a part. Many times crossing the stage between acts she would pass an actor and look directly in his face without recognising him, so completely lost in the other personality as to have forgotten her own.

M. Worth tells how after a triumph at Paris, such as he has never seen a French actress achieve, he took her to her hotel, where the minute she entered her room she threw herself on the bed, sobbing. . . . She had come out of the personality and for that night at least she could give nothing more of herself to the world. . . . Triumph for triumph's sake meant *nothing* to her ; it was the visible proof that she had not given

in vain that was her comfort and joy in her success.

Without bidding farewell to Italy, but with the bitterness of farewell in her heart, Eleonora Duse had departed for America.

From time to time echoes of her marvellous triumphs reached the beloved Patria, the Patria that she was never to see again.

"There is no longer the weight of reality in her art," was heard. "She is purely spiritual. Only the soul reveals itself. The woman is a myth—art alone speaks." And many, many other similar phrases that filled the hearts of the proud Italians with joy and made them ready at last to give her all, and more than she had asked for, but—too late.

Never had she been received as she was all over the United States. And she could no longer rejoice. She did not even see the people about her; and in the presence of the listening crowds that filled the theatres she was alone. Applause filled her with fear, knowing as she did that an excess of emotion could break the fine thread that kept her tied to life. The augmenting glory terrified her. She was thirsty for peace. But for her there was no peace. Renunciation was less bitter than victory: and both were equally necessary. Day by day, in the midst of the deafening applause, she was dying. In the bright lights of the theatre she saw only the darkness of her night coming nearer and nearer. She loved and feared it. She wanted and dreaded it.

In her younger days she had frequently spoken of death, and until the last few months of her life the subject was never far from her thoughts; but at the end she rarely mentioned it.

A few months before she died she said to Enif Robert, still in her place of faithful friend in time of need;

"Do you know when you wrote and asked me to come back that you said something so just that in reading it I found comfort for myself? You said: 'We return to you, signora, renewed, renovated as it were by the serenity of simple home life. It is so good to live far from the tumult of the theatre that we could never have conceived the thought of returning, except with you.'

"You summed it all up in those few words: 'renewed by the serenity of home life; renovated by the repose'—as I hope I am to-day."

She could not live far from the footlights to which prenatal influence and the unnatural birth had destined her; but the sublime contradiction of a greatness never before achieved made her long for the silence, even in the midst of the seduction of theatrical life.

Without giving any idea as to her reason for so doing the Duse asked the members of her company individually if they would remain in America, in case she should not go back in January, as had been planned. The reply never varied:

"Yes, signora, I will gladly remain with you here, or anywhere."

For many, many years the Duse had not travelled with her company, but the entire tour of the United States was made not only in the same train, but in the same car with her actors, for, knowing of the unusual life-insurance policy that the managers had taken out, she seemed to be afraid of being alone.

"One never knows," she explained when asked how it was that she travelled with the company; "having that insurance they might try to kill me—and I don't want to die that way."

In fact, the backers of the Morris Gest tour, which was to consist of twenty performances, insured the tour with Lloyd's in London for 360,000 dollars as a

safeguard against losses due to indisposition of the actress, accidents or other causes which might necessitate a cancellation of dates. The insurance policy when taken out was considered unique in the history of the theatrical profession and of underwriting practice.

So when nearing the end of the tour arranged by Maurice Gest, the Duse decided that, despite the terrible fatigue which kept her continually confined to her room, it would be better to prolong her stay in the United States than to return to Italy, for once in Europe she would be obliged to finish the interrupted contract in Vienna.

It was winter—cold—and at that season of the year the sea was apt to be rough and the crossing bad.

Various members of her company had from time to time mentioned the fact that they could get another manager to book her, if she would consent to remain longer in the United States. Word of this had reached the great tragedienne.

In Baltimore she called the entire company together to discuss the idea of continuing their tour.

In her private sitting-room of the hotel she looked smilingly from one familiar face to another.

"Of course," she said, "the women have nothing to suggest?"

The women shook their heads.

"Benassi!" She turned to her leading man.

"No, signora, I haven't looked for business."

"I suppose not"—she nodded wisely—"you expected business to look for you. And you, Robert?" She looked at the stalwart grey-haired man who for so many long years had been one of her faithful actors. "You were always silent, so naturally will remain so. . . . And you, Galvani" (another of her very old actors), "*tu chi sai tanto scucito per conto tuo* (who cannot even look after yourself), *chi hai mancato*



MEMO BENASSI.
The Duse's last leading man.

come artista, come pittore, e come marito (who are no particular good as actor, painter, or husband), certainly will not have any suggestion."

But in that she was wrong, for Galvani had a manager who was ready and anxious to book her, and who would pay her more than Gest had.

The manager was Fortunato Gallo, an Italian, who could get her a contract with the Selwyn Brothers.

The matter was decided, and Galvani authorised to telegraph to Gallo.

Two days later Fortunato Gallo arrived at Baltimore and was presented to Eleonora Duse. He offered her good bookings and three thousand dollars a performance. (Maurice Gest had paid her two thousand five hundred.) Difficult as it was for her to even think of travelling, she accepted his proposition, and he departed for New York.

Several days later Mr. Selwyn, accompanied by Mr. Gallo, arrived with the contract ready for Madame Duse's signature.

She received them in her private sitting-room, where the very formal-looking document was laid out on the table; the contents minutely explained by Mr. Selwyn, interpreted by Mr. Gallo.

"I'm sure it is quite in order"—Mme Duse looked from Selwyn to Gallo—"but before I sign it I had better have it read to me, as I would not want to put my name to anything that I could not live up to. Will you permit Mr. Gallo to translate it for me?" The smile that never failed to send its luminous rays into the depths of the hardest of hearts for a second brightened her face.

Mr. Selwyn bowed when Mr. Gallo repeated in English what she had said.

She rose and moved towards the door to the adjoining room, followed by Mr. Gallo.

"Just a moment, madam!" With a regal gesture

Selwyn drew a small gold fountain-pen from his breast-pocket, reverently kissed it, then handed it to her. "I beg you to sign the contract with this pen, so that I may always have a souvenir of you."

The gesture explained his desire, and unhesitatingly she graciously took the pen.

Mr. Gallo read the contract through. It was found to be in perfect order, and the Duse moved close to a small table and sat down to sign it.

The "E" was faint; she shook the pen, tried a second time. Evidently there was no ink there, for it did not write. She shook it again, with the same result. Then she glanced questioningly at Gallo.

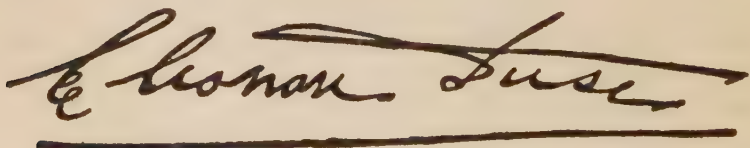
"Try this one!" He took an ordinary fountain-pen from his pocket, and without any sentimental gesture offered it to her.

"No," she raised her exquisite hand in a gesture of refusal. "I cannot use your pen, for——"

"Why not?" Evidently Gallo was in a hurry to get away. "One pen is as good as another, it's the name that counts."

"But if I use your pen when Mr. Selwyn believes that I have used his, I shall be deliberately acting a lie. No, I must make this one write." She shook it more violently.

The result was as before. She hesitated a second, then took Mr. Gallo's pen and clear and unfalteringly wrote :



With the little gold pen in her hand she returned to the sitting-room, and graciously returned it to Mr. Selwyn.

As he took the pen from her Selwyn bowed and for the second time kissed it, then slipped it into his breast-pocket.

"Thank you," he said simply, "I shall treasure it always because Eleonora Duse used it to sign her contract with me . . . perhaps her last contract," he murmured under his breath.

"What did he say," she asked Mr. Gallo anxiously. Gallo translated Selwyn's words.

"Tell him that"—a wistful expression came into the marvellous eyes, that no amount of suffering could ever dim—"that . . ."

Gallo took out his watch, and made a motion to Selwyn. . . . Without further explanation the two managers took their leave.

When alone she dropped disconsolately into a chair. . . .

"He will show the little gold pen to his family and friends, exceeding happy that Eleonora Duse signed her contract with it; and he will be proud—while I—I must remember that I deceived a man who was honest with me, and—I—I shall be ashamed."

And for three nights she was unable to sleep, torturing herself over the memory of her deception.

The respect for Mr. Gallo, ex-theatrical agent, who had become her business manager, fell irrevocably. Unfortunately, the poor man was to know it only too well: as, during the entire tour, he was obliged to write even the smallest communication that he had to make to her, for she refused to speak to him again, unable to have faith in a man capable of even so insignificant a deception.

It is not known to any of her intimates if there were other minor causes in their relations, before the incident of the contract, to make her lose faith in

Mr. Gallo, but it was proven that, if not the only cause, it was certainly the greatest influence against him.

So great was the harmonic resonance of her restless, watchful sensibility that every gesture, every word of others invariably produced an effect, making it more than difficult for those who were constantly with her not to be guilty of an occasional false note in word or action.

Memo Benassi, who played the stranger in "The Lady from the Sea," tells how the Duse once told him that he must never let her see him in the wings during the first and second acts, so that when he entered the scene it would seem to her that he had truly come from far away; and with that impression the past of Ellida would come to her immediately.

"If I see you beforehand I will not know how to feel that sense of bewildered astonishment . . . nor will you be able to *frighten* me."

Yet with all the truth and reality of her art there were times when she permitted herself the luxury of stepping for a moment out of the personage that for at least twenty-four hours before the performance she had been creating, making her frequently insupportable to those near at hand, but to the world the other side of the footlights—the divine preceptress of dramatic art.

American Indians and Negroes were the people that interested and aroused her curiosity, and many times she was almost childish in her desire to see them. The Southern States, she had been told, were where the Negroes abounded, and the Indians in the West.

One of the last performances under the direction of Morris Gest was given in Baltimore. . . . The curtain had gone up on the first act of "La Citta Morta." The blind Anna was seated, the faithful nurse (Enif Robert) standing beside her. The dialogue

was taking place on the far side of the stage, when, with half-closed eyes, the Duse peered curiously out over the footlights, and without even turning towards the nurse she whispered :

“ Tell me, are they black or white ? ”

The cue came before she could explain what she was referring to. When she had ended her scene she was again beside the nurse :

“ Well ? ”

“ I think they are white.” Enif Robert had had time to discover what she wanted to know, and to look over the house to reassure herself.

“ Oh, what a pity ! ” There was real disappointment in the low tone. “ I had so hoped to at last see a theatre filled with black faces.”

The new contract called for a tour of the Southern States—Havana, California ; several middle-west cities—Pittsburg, Boston, and New York.

Up to New Orleans all went well, but from there to Havana the voyage was full of anguish.

She left New Orleans knowing that her daughter was dangerously ill and likely to have to undergo an operation. The anxiety augmented considerably her already over-fatigued condition, and made the slow crossing unbearable.

Frequently Enif Robert went on tiptoe to the door of her state-room to make sure that all was well. Seeing the anxious loving face the Duse called her in.

“ I’m tired,” she said plaintively, “ tired of being a cardboard mother. I can’t wait to return to Asolo, where I hope my daughter, my real daughter, will come to spend at least the summer with me. . . . How can I play the day after to-morrow—how address in the name of stage maternity an imitation son, when I know that I owe to the theatre the fact that to-day I am far from my Henriette’s bedside ? ”

And her anguish multiplied until she was thinking of the most desperate conditions imaginable in her daughter's far-away home.

Fortunately she found a cable at the hotel in Havana advising her that the operation was not necessary, and a speedy recovery hoped for.

After the good news she was all smiles, and even physical suffering seemed to have ceased.

To those who devotedly, humbly reproved her for unnecessary worry during the voyage she smilingly replied :

"Of course you're right, but I can't change my temperament."

At Havana things were not to her liking. She thought continually of the return voyage, no doubt measuring her strength, feeling more than ever how far she was from the little nest at Asolo, where she was counting upon passing a long period of peaceful repose.

When the health inspector came aboard the boat from Havana, he passed rapidly along the decks, looking carelessly into eyes, indifferently taking temperatures. Arrived at the Duse he glanced at her card, and without the slightest warning, or before she had time to remonstrate, he stuck a thermometer in her mouth. She, who always had fever, by a stroke of Fate was free from it that day. Had she had even one degree she would have been held in quarantine for several days at least.

In February, 1924, the company arrived in California, where the balmy air immediately seemed to give her new life. Los Angeles and San Francisco were the last places where she had at least the appearance of health.

At San Francisco, in the beautiful Fairmont Hotel overlooking the sea, with renewed strength and energy, she dreamed of returning to Asolo—yes, and also of

working again. Her ardent projects were fresh, miraculously clear, so clear that they who had the fortune to hear them must to-day, more than ever, weep for what the world of Art has lost with her.

Playwrights have lost the unique interpreter, actors will never again find the superb guide of human consciousness, and the public can nevermore witness an equal perfection.

The editor of the *Oakland Examiner*, published in San Francisco, wrote what was the universal opinion of her on the second part of her tour :

“ Nearly a generation has passed since I saw Eleonora Duse, but she is still the great actress of those days, she still joins hearts and minds with a balance more perfect than other living artists.

“ She was there, very fragile, almost wraith-like, quite white-haired. She was there more than 6,000 miles away from the theatre where I saw her the last time, when the public, in a frenzy, outstretched its arms to the ‘ Divina.’ She was there with an aura of sadness hovering over her. She sat bending forward reading a book, immeasurably removed from the gaping crowd. I was aware of the deep lines in her face of marmoreal pallor, and I felt the glow of her eyes half drooping over the book. Then the play began. I became acquainted with the actors : the son, Guilio ; the husband, Ippolito ; the lover, Decio ; a priest and a girl relative.

“ ‘ La Porta Chiusa,’ by Marco Praga, is not an intellectual play. It is flimsy and theatrical in substance. It stands only because the Duse gives to it the fire and flame of her genius.

“ Duse is there behind the piano. She spoke the first words, and through them goes the first throb of the drama. Her enunciation is vibrantly clear ; she has mastered the art of throwing a whisper to the

gallery. The first act is pale and anæmic. The lines of it are simple, without subtlety. But the climax is in the second act, when the son lets his natural father and mother know that he knows the secret of his birth, and that it is absolutely necessary that he go. It is a scene of really poignant power. That realisation is a blow to her. Her whole frame is shot through with terror, with the anguish of the mother and of the *peccatrice*.

“ She sinks into a chair and seems to want to disappear. She hides her face from her son ; savagely she hides it first in her arms, and after in her palms, and later on his chest. Her hands, those famous speaking hands, begin to talk again. Their gestures are the gestures of resignation and despairing futility. Her hands are rising and falling with the voice that is sad. They have sometimes a flashing arc of gesture, without a break, one mood changing gracefully into another. She has accepted all with submission. Now she smiles. She has a smile of tenderness. The son waits. She still can do something for him. He shall go on his expedition.

“ The drama ends with a word that the Duse repeats twice : ‘ Sola ! ’ (Alone !) Twice the bi-syllabic word comes from her pale lips ; first with a deep tone, as if she is searching the inner roots of her anguish, of her desolation, and then, raising her eyes to heaven as if to find refuge and peace in the submission of her destiny, she repeats the word with a tone clear and high but slightly glazed by her repressed tears. ‘ Sola ! ’ she repeats, and a heroic beauty shines in her face. In that word she puts all herself. It is a cry of loneliness, wonder and age-old sadness, a cry that no one who watched her last night will forget.

“ The *fuoco sacro* of the old days is still there, in that frail body, in that soul enriched by the years ; it is still burning under those lines that time and care have traced on her. The years have not quenched it.

"The performance was of absolute symmetry. A performance of form and colour in which every accessory is blended so completely that the whole appears inevitable. The plaintively melodious voice, the outstretched arms, the simplicity of movement, the utter subordination of the actress to the part, the stillness with which she could imbue the quieter pauses in the emotion, the most beautiful gestures—gestures of plastic grace—these are the things that mark the Duse apart from others.

"She unites in her reading, in every gesture, the tone of the highest distinction with the utmost simplicity. Her method is realistic. But she adds Italian grace. Her inimitable grace. Her acting is perfect even as the *terzina* of Dante is perfect."

Continuing her studying and reading, the Duse had, besides her personal luggage, two trunks full of books, most of them collected along the way.

While at the Fairmont Hotel Enif Robert took her the latest Italian novels that she had bought in San Francisco. One was by Rosso San Secondo, called: "The Woman Who Can Understand—Understands." . . . Several hours later the Duse sent for Mme Robert. She had already read the book, which she had thoroughly enjoyed, and began at once a minute and eloquent discussion of it; going most profoundly into the subject which the author had set forth. . . . From that she turned to women in general, and their true place in the world.

"If women, instead of trying to conquer on the field, urged on by war-like instincts, pushing themselves into business, journalism, and even commerce, would remember that independence is grand, but that mixing in affairs makes them eventually lose the gentleness and sweetness that is the one thing given them to *hold* man's devotion."

Yet, despite this expression of an inner sentiment, she was a keen believer in women's rights, and a firm friend to her sisters in distress, helping all in her power to relieve the conditions of those who were totally unsuccessful.

She spoke of marriage as "a fundamental element of human society, the defects of which the tumultuous life of to-day has made more manifest and serious.

"It is necessary to understand.

"Much, much sweetness must be used to annihilate the daily indifference. To sweetness must be added the knowledge of how to suffer with strength of soul renewed each day for the combat. And if there is a weak spot in the armour, pad it with endurance."

To the unhappy men or women who confided in her she explained with the charm that left no doubt in the listener's mind as to her being right :

"The daily prose of married life is the slow ruin of even the grandest love. . . . One cannot live without poetry."

The tepid days in California passed all too quickly.

With the passing of the days her desire to stay on in San Francisco increased, for it seemed that a strange presentiment warned her that the cold of the North, to which she must return, would conquer her.

"At least let me stay in the good warm sun of the grand Pacific all of the month of April," she said more than once, with sweet pleading in her voice, submission in her eyes. "I am so afraid of the cold."

Still it was not possible to grant her plea. The itinerary had been too precisely and unalterably arranged for Mr. Gallo to chance postponing any of the dates.

So with a sad heart the tired Nomad set out on the journey that was to take her to the end of her glorious and tormented way.

Crossing the arid desert of Arizona, under the



"THE CLOSED DOOR."
The Porziuncola Gate, through which
Eleonora Duse passed to go to the
Capponcina.



CASA DUSE AT ASOLO.
The Last Home.

burning rays of the sun, the Duse again suffered atrociously from the suffocating heat and the fine sand that, despite the double windows of the sleeping-car, penetrated her compartment.

Certainly nothing could have been more suicidal for the worn-out lungs.

There were hours and hours of real martyrdom for her, when from time to time she asked wearily:

"*E finito ? E finito ?*" (Has it ended ?)

And each time she asked the question the kind, sad eyes were more anxious.

At last the Robert, who had passed the compartment in which the "signora" lay, propped up by many pillows, at least a thousand times, ran to her, crying enthusiastically :

"Signora ! Signora ! the suffocating heat has ended, there will be no more dust ; I've seen snow. Snow, signora !"

In fact there had been particles of white in the air against the direction of the train that to anxious eyes were mistaken for snow.

"Oh, already ?"

With a quick movement the Duse raised the window-shade, with a violent gesture immediately lowering it again, and turning, she looked fixedly for a moment at the little woman standing fearfully before her.

Oh, to have seen her face ! First the radiant hope, then a new inexplicable anguish.

"Oh, there is no snow ?" The pain was so real on the beloved face that the Robert, moved beyond herself, was unable to find words of comfort. "It seemed to me . . . Perhaps there was white in the air," she murmured. "I—I don't quite know."

What were those marvellous eyes saying ? There was snow--yes ; and there was bitter cold also in that rapid train running, running desperately, towards *Death*—towards *Death*.

Besides the oxygen which she inhaled frequently, even when relatively well, and which, as she said, was her "one luxury," she also had a preference for eucalyptus, inhaling the perfume of the little tropical fruit gathered under the trees in California.

She had tried everything to quiet the asthma, yet with the most complicated respiratory cures at hand she was always willing to try any simple new remedy suggested to her.

No one ever had more courage than the Duse in fighting for health. She wanted to overcome her malady, and all of her indomitable will was back of the force that she used. . . . She believed that she could make herself well—and *she would*.

Believing in the power of her will, with a stoic smile she supported the cough that for years had more or less racked her.

For long, long years she had resisted, but on the last tap of the journey—the fatal Pittsburg—she was to succumb in the fight.

Always delicate as to her taste in food, during the last months in America she travelled with a portable invalid's kitchen, enclosed in a large basket chest, and on the train nearly all of her meals were prepared by Mlle. Desirée and her maid ; the cooking done on a tiny alcohol stove.

Her principal foods were light nourishing soups, boiled chicken, and fruit jellies—generally orange.

In hotels, from the time Mlle. Desirée joined the Duse until the end, one of her most difficult tasks was arranging with the chef for a substantial and delicately tempting meal for the grand actress.

During the last two or three years she took cognac or champagne as a last resource against physical fatigue. . . . At New York a friend sent her a case of champagne (thirty-six bottles) which was packed in a special

box, for travelling, that in no way resembled anything containing alcoholics. A glass of champagne gave a shock to the nervous system, and she always took one before going to the theatre, and at the very end cognac was used to keep her up during the performance.

Indianapolis—Detroit—Pittsburg—Cleveland.

Four cities in each of which she was to have given but one performance.

April came in cold and stormy all over the Western and Eastern States. At Indianapolis the performance began well, but the Duse was more than usually nervous. She played with an effort—she, who on the stage, even in the most violently agitated moments of ill-health, had never let her suffering be seen.

In fact, many times, having seen her a few minutes before the curtain, with an expression of utter fatigue, inhaling oxygen, one more than marvelled to see her enter with virile freshness of walk and gesture, transformed by an invisible force into an unforgettable vision—the vision that thousands of people will always remember, and that no other perfection in Art can ever cancel.

Detroit.

Cold, uncomfortable—her one desire to leave, to leave, to leave !

It was necessary to make haste. As though pursued by the hope of being able to reach Italy, Asolo—the refuge longed for—she insisted upon haste.

“ *Presto, presto, figlioli !* ” (Hurry, hurry, children !) was what she invoked during the performance. “ Hurry the lines, finish the performance, leave this city, leave the next and the next—get to the end of the contract.”

Away ! Away !

At times it seemed almost a physical impatience

that urged her on, and even when sitting down she nervously tapped her foot to mark time.

Go . . . Where ?

Escape . . . From what !

At Pittsburg she was to play at the Syria Mosque, an enormous edifice with two galleries, and a seating capacity of 3,850 persons. The ground floor is 206 ft. wide and 104 ft. long, the stage 100 ft. wide and 36 ft. long. There is a box set, a smaller stage that drops on the big one and which is used for dramatic performances, but when this small stage is in place there are very wide corridors on either side through which draughts pass freely : a theatre perfectly adapted for Eleonora Duse.

And at Pittsburg the mortal blow came. On the dark, murky evening of April 5th, when going to the theatre at the hour of the performance, through the chauffeur's fatal mistake she was obliged to wait over five minutes in the pouring rain—before a closed door.

Posters were all over the city, and the placard before the Syria Mosque read :

ELEONORA DUSE,
AND HER COMPANY FROM ROME, IN
"THE CLOSED DOOR."

The old legendary habit of Assisi comes to my mind again, making the closed door before which Eleonora Duse waited strangely symbolical.

In vain the secretary and the property man of the company tried to protect her from the rain and furious icy wind, while others ran to have the door opened from the inside.

She finally entered trembling ; even the heavy opossum coat which she wore and the automobile cover had not been enough to keep her warm. She was chilled to the bone, her clothes damp and her feet wet.

In the dressing-room she complained of feeling ill, but insisted upon playing just the same, urging her *ragazzi* to hurry. Well and good, but considering the conscientious severity with which she regarded her art, her work, the hurry was not a good prognostication.

Despite her determination that evening she did not succeed in entirely hiding her suffering. In the first act, in which Bianca Querceta has very little to do, she was distracted, and only admirable in her suave abandon.

She revived somewhat in the second act, in the scene that she *lived*; hiding her face from her son's scorn, and in self-defence for her sin of the past.

She was *grand*, perfect as always in the two final "Sola—sola!" How strangely significant were the last words that she pronounced on the stage!

In fact, "Sola," for no other will ever be what she was. "Sola" in Art, uniquely touched by the breath of the gods. "Sola" in her last agony.

Scarcely able to stand, again and again she replied to the mad applause.

The public crowded about the orchestra, pushing to the footlights, calling and calling for her, until at last she returned, standing between the curtains, supporting herself against an unseen chair, smiling and bowing graciously; when back in the wings she murmured:

"*Basta, non ne posso pui!*" (Enough, I can resist no more!)

Almost as though the presentiment that she would never again enter a theatre was before her, she lingered longer than usual in the dressing-room; sitting silently, resting her head on the tired hand. The presentiment seemed to grow upon her that, going out of the theatre that evening, she was leaving her Kingdom forever.

The following day she had a high fever.

For a week the malady ran its course, from

influenza developing into pneumonia, the fever always higher, the suffering intense.

The Cleveland date was postponed, but, the manager not believing the statement issued by Dr. Barone, the attending physician, a doctor was sent from Cleveland to examine the patient.

The day he arrived the Duse was feeling better, and made an attempt to get up, collapsing almost immediately ; so that when the Cleveland doctor insisted upon being admitted to her room, he found her in bed.

She refused to permit him to examine her, saying :
" If he is a doctor, one look at me will suffice."

He returned to Cleveland satisfied that it would be impossible for her to act there or anywhere again.

Thursday before Easter several of her actors saw her for a few minutes, most of them encouraged by the mere fact of her having asked for the visits.

" Come and sit beside me for five minutes," she said to the faithful Enif Robert, who on tiptoe entered her room at the Schenley Hotel. " I have been very, very ill, and have taken so much quinine that I am a little deaf. Come very near, and speak loud."

She became drowsy immediately, and when she roused again she said :

" What are all you exiles doing in this forced repose ? And it's nearly Easter. . . . But we will leave . . . we will leave very soon. . . . I want to go back to Asolo."

She moved restlessly in bed, mussing the adorable silver-white hair, that seemed to suffer also in her anguish.

The Robert got up and, reaching over, arranged the stray locks. A weak, loving smile, carrying mortal fatigue, passed over the pale face as her thanks.

Again she became drowsily unconscious, and again she roused herself ; pushing back the pillows,

she sat up, and in a clear, firm voice said a verse in Roman dialect :

*" E dopo er serra serra,
Riecchece pe' terra."*

She meant to signify to the Robert, who had been with her the winter before, during her illness at Milan, that she was merely ill *again*.

"Come back to-morrow," she said when the visit had come to an end. But the following day no one was permitted to enter the room, where the doctor had ordered absolute silence.

During all of Good Friday she was semi-conscious.

And on Easter even, when the church bells were ringing the glorious tidings of the Resurrection, she instead was approaching the Great Unknown.

In every conscious moment the asthma tormented her.

With a gesture of inimitable grace, that marvellous grace all her own that suffering had rendered distressing, she extended a hand now to one, now to the other, of the two faithful women who for two weeks, night and day, had been near to help and care for her.

The periods of unconsciousness seemed to renew her force to further resistance. Reawakening, she was lucid and her voice normal, and more than once she looked fixedly at the two tireless ones : Mlle. Desirée and Maria Ovagadro.

On Easter morning she had the last thought for her actors.

She wanted them all near her on that great feast day, so that they would feel less lonely far from the Patria and their families.

That half hour when she talked of them was the respite from suffering that Death generally concedes—the tranquillity just before the end. She even talked of getting well, hurrying the preparations for departure

—resigned at last to breaking the contract—but certainly the thought that in only a few hours she would be starting off on a different journey was far from her.

The lungs had been calmed, the only suffering was from the inexorable asthma.

The visit from the actors was not possible, for when they arrived, having been advised by telephone, the signora was again drowsily unconscious.

Sad, but never dreaming of the terrible catastrophe that was to come upon them, they returned to their various hotels. Only one among them had a premonition that all was not well, and until long after midnight lay awake, feeling that she should have remained at the Schenley in case the “signora” asked for her. As an actress she had never been other than a willing super, but she had known intimately the woman Eleonora Duse, an honour that perhaps no other actress who ever played with her had had.

Between periods of clearest consciousness and drowsiness the long, sad hours of Easter Day passed.

Twice she asked for her glasses to read the letters and telegrams that were piled in a basket in the adjoining room. After glancing over a few she again fell into unconsciousness.

Towards six o'clock she asked once more for her actors. Mlle. Desirée told her that they had come and gone, leaving flowers and their good wishes.

The last telegram that she read was from a dear friend in London, who, having read in the papers of her illness, asked if she should come to America to comfort her.

“No, no—I'm better. She must not think of taking the long trip—I will see her in London . . . soon.”

At eight o'clock the doctor gave her an injection of camphorated oil, awaiting the result with anxiety.

She who had been seriously ill for twenty years, fighting willingly with all her strength to overcome

disease, rebelled at the injection. "Enough of these cures—I don't want an injection."

And in a voice in which the somnolence was already heard she begged: "No . . . to-morrow."

Unconsciousness almost immediately followed the injection. The doctor announced to the poor frightened women that there was very little hope of her living through the night.

At one o'clock on Monday morning, April 21st, she stirred, raised herself in bed, and with wide-open eyes looked at the two devoted women petrified by mute anguish, and asked if it was yet dawn.

"At dawn we must leave."

She asked if the champagne had been packed, and, if it had not, the man must be sent for at once to nail up the case. She wanted to drink, and to have the window opened wide on the cold, dark night of the sleeping Pittsburg, where the only sound was the rumbling of the monstrous machines in the huge far-away factories.

The icy breath of the night—or was it the Grim Monster—in a second filled the quiet room as with a strange, uncanny presence. The window was closed, but too late, for like a bat attracted by the dim light near the bed the Reaper had entered.

At 2.30 a.m. exactly she again opened her eyes, once more raised herself on the pillows, looked fixedly from one to the other trembling woman, made a gesture of resignation, crossing the divine hands above her head and letting them fall heavily on her lap.

Her head dropped forward resting on Mlle. Desirée's shoulder, the eyes closed . . .

For always.

For six days and six nights, dressed all in white, she lay among the white roses in a mortuary chapel at Pittsburg.

Her actors watched by turn, kneeling at the foot of the couch between the candles, where in an attitude of calm peace their "signora" slept.

Day and night she was watched over by those faithful loving men and women, never a minute through all the long hours alone.

Upon receipt of a telegram from Italy, Prince Gelasio Caetani, the Ambassador, in the name of the Italian Government, went to Pittsburg to pay his country's tribute to the Grand Actress, and to arrange for the funeral and the long return voyage.

Through the night, travelling from Pittsburg to New York, they—the men of the company—watched beside the casket, and afterwards in the church at New York.

When Eleonora Duse's death was announced Gabriele d'Annunzio telegraphed from Gardone Rivera, Lake Gardo, to Mussolini :

"The tragic destiny of Eleonora Duse could not be accomplished more tragically. Far from Italy the most Italian of hearts has died. I ask that the adored body be returned to Italy at the Government's expense. I am certain that my pain is the pain of all Italians. Listen to my prayer, and answer."

To which the Italian Prime Minister replied :

"The fate of Eleonora Duse, to whom a year ago I offered an appanage so that the sublime actress would not have to leave Italy, has profoundly grieved me. As soon as her tragic end was known I telegraphed to our Ambassador at Washington to go to Pittsburg immediately to arrange for the transport of the body, which will be at the Government's expense."

The British, American, French, German and Austrian Press wrote articles of condolence ; every Italian



ELEONORA DUSE'S LAST RESTING-PLACE.
Asolo, facing Monte Grappa.

writer of note gave the public a few words regarding her life ; hundreds of telegrams from all over the world were sent to the management. Every theatre in Italy remained dark for one evening as a sign of mourning ; and many companies dressed in half mourning from the time the notice of her death was received until the body reached Asolo.

The mortal remains of Eleonora Duse, accompanied by the entire company, arrived at New York on Sunday afternoon, April 27th, and were met at the station by the Italian Consul, a representative of the city of New York, and several friends.

In the most private form possible the body was taken to the Dominican Church at 66th Street and Lexington Avenue, where on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday the casket, almost buried in flowers, lay in state. There were flowers sent from all parts of Europe—from New York actresses, society women, and from thousands and thousands of Italians in every walk of life, scattered all over the United States.

On Thursday morning, May 1st, at 10 o'clock, the Funeral Mass was celebrated. . . . Martinelli, the Italian tenor, sang, and a chorus of children invoked peace for the soul of the Grand Departed.

From the church, through 66th Street, up Fifth Avenue to 72nd Street, crossing Central Park to the Mall, the hearse was led by mounted police followed by the Italian Ambassador, the company, and several thousand admirers. At the Mall the procession halted, resting for five minutes in absolute silence : the men bareheaded, many kneeling. . . . Leaving Central Park by a west gate, they proceeded directly to the pier of the transatlantic line where the *Duilio* was anchored.

Covering the top of the casket there was one magnificent wreath :

VICTOR EMANUEL TO ELEONORA DUSE.

On the right side a wreath from the Italian Government, and on the left one from her daughter ; all the other flowers were piled in an automobile directly back of the hearse.

When it was arranged that the *Duilio* was to transport the remains of Eleonora Duse to Italy, the manager of La Navigazione Generale Italiana announced that it would be impossible to book the actors on the same steamer, as every first-class cabin was sold. All of the members of the company protested : they had stuck faithfully to their "Signora," and not for any reason would they consent to abandon her on her last voyage. It made no difference what discomforts they might have to endure, they would travel with her. . . . If there was nothing in the first-class they would go in the second, if the second was complete they would bunk in the steerage. No Government plan, nothing, was going to take the "Signora" from America without them to watch over her.

Finally arrangements were made, and the actors, managers, companion and maid were given sleeping accommodation in second-class cabins on board the *Duilio*. Each day during the long crossing they were permitted to descend to the steerage to be near for a few minutes the third-class cabin transformed into a mortuary chapel in which their beloved Teacher, Companion, Friend—their "Signora"—among the flowers and spluttering candles lay at rest.

The emotion was very great at Naples when, towards the end of a cloudless day, the big ocean liner, a grey speck on the horizon, was sighted.

Representatives from the foreign Society of Authors, high Government officials, many friends, and a host of the curious were gathered on the docks awaiting the arrival of the "Grandissima."

When at length the *Duilio* docked at the Immacoletta Nuova the obstreperous, noisy Neopolitan crowd became silent, looking with something like fear at the bow of the ship. There on the bridge, wrapped in her country's flag, the lone wanderer, returned from her last long voyage, slept, hidden forever from human view in the American triple casket. . . . The draped coffin suggested a ciborium, emanating the peace that she had asked of the earth while offering kindness to the unfortunates who crossed her pathway.

After a last benediction the casket was raised high, swung dizzily in mid-air, then slowly lowered in the midst of the silent crowd. The hour of supreme offering had come, and they consigned her to the Patria in a feast of sunshine and blue sky ; but to many of them the splendour and warmth seemed useless, because the "Signora" was dead—dead from the cold, in the murky fogs of Pittsburg.

The grand Funeral Mass, Italy's last homage to her, was said in the beautiful church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, at Rome. The old church seen from the doors presented the effect of a single grand altar. On an escutcheon over the doors were the beautiful words of Silvio d'Amico :

"Rome and the Mother Italy implore in the hour of return from her last pilgrimage the Peace of God for the anguished soul of Eleonora Duse."

During the divine service and the early hours of the afternoon, thousands of persons passed in line through the transepts, stopping to pray at the foot of the catafalque illumined by many candles, and guarded by four women in deepest mourning. . . . The flowers, brought by all those who had even remotely known her, rested against the side walls and columns. . . . The choruses of Palestrina and Perosi were very beautifully rendered.

The real mourning, such as she would have desired, was at Asolo, the little mountain village where she had found repose and almost happiness, and was the farewell that those who loved her will always remember.

At every station where the train stopped from Rome to Treviso, despite the advanced hour of the night, actors, writers, the public, were all there crowded on the platform to deposit flowers and to bow before the venerated casket. . . . The silence of profound emotion was felt all along the line, and in those dense crowds there were few whose eyes were not dimmed by tears.

Her great love for her country, her still greater love for humanity, was understood at last.

Automobiles were waiting at Montabelluna to take the retinue to Asolo. The grand docks that seemed to unite the points of the Universe were no more ; nor the great city with its unknown multitudes, that absorb and deaden all tenderness : there everything was different, the open country, cut in between the mountains, stretched away for miles and miles, the fresh early summer air blew in soft caressing breaths over the silent people in the automobiles following the hearse up the hill.

From every window flags tied with crêpe hung limply in the glorious sunlight ; and, despite the voiceless silence of the village, there was the impression of some mystic feast. On the walls notices were posted : *Lutto cittadino*. (General mourning.)

The mountain town was lifeless—for there, in the midst of the long procession winding its weary way to the church a mile distant, lay the soul of it.

First came the village children, then five men in breeches and wigs, one of them on horseback, according to an old tradition ; carabinieri, fascisti, clergy ; girls and boys carrying flags and wreaths of flowers ; the

hearse drawn by six horses with black caparisons ; then the family, the company, friends and the entire burg, besides many who had come from nearby villages. . . . Passing the Duse's house—the lovely old Morison palace with its pink stone walls, beautiful Renaissance windows and green doors, the arcade and niche where before the tiny Madonna a lone candle burns night and day—there was a momentary halt ; at the garden gate an old peasant woman, the caretaker, watched—awaiting the return of her beloved mistress.

Before the little church on the green hillside the last farewells were rendered her. Representatives of the Italian Government, Dario Niccodemi (President of the Italian Authors' Society), Edouard Schneider (for the French authors and actors), the Mayor of Asolo, an old German actor, and a young man from Chioggia, spoke. Words, mere words, were inadequate to express the grief, but the communion of souls was there ; and I think that she who hated speeches and ceremonies must have pardoned those who spoke so reverently beside her casket, understanding that they were trying in a small way to express the world's great love for her.

The day after the official farewells the Intimate Mass was celebrated at St. Anne's Church. Her daughter, a few familiar friends, the company, and women from the mountains were the only ones present. Women who had never assisted at her triumphs, who knew her only as the lady of kindness and love, their grand comforter in hours of need and desolation.

The long Mass ended, the last benediction said, stalwart men of the village lifted the heavy bronze casket to their shoulders, and slowly, proudly, walked forward through the narrow alley of the cemetery, lined by the already faded wreaths of flowers, their touching epigrammed ribbons like trophies of a glorious battle, to the hillside and the open grave ; the priest

in his white robes, the crucifer and acolytes leading the way. In the intense silence of the mountains, broken only by an occasional sob, the casket was lowered to the ground.

“ Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust ; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to Eternal Life . . . ” All the anguish of suffering past, no longer the unanswerable question “ Why ? ” ; no more heart-aches for the pain of others, never again misunderstood ; finally “ Sola ” in the silence that she had so truly loved, in the place where she had longed to be : facing the high chain of mountains, with now and then a speck of white smoke rising from some farmhouse in the valley ; to the east the Castle of Asolo, and below on the hillside groups of houses, and there, under the immobile limpid Italian sky, the strange haunting peace of infinite space.

And there her devoted, loving *figlioli* left her.

“ Sola,” spiritually in the hearts of all, the divine body hidden away in a triple casket, under a simple marble slab hewn from the *sacro montagna*, in the beautiful little cemetery of St. Anne, at Asolo, overlooking the magnificent Grappa, Eleonora Duse, born Italian, child of the theatre, the world’s greatest tragedienne, the “ Signora ” who knew no peace, woman of pure heart and purer soul, sleeps—eternally.

THE END

SALEM ADAMS 505



WITHDRAWN

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AUTHOR

Ac. 47688

DeBonis, Sofia

TITLE

Eleanora Duse

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